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The Coup That Failed

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A week ago it seemed that a deadly blow had been struck at the Labour government. Frustrated in most of its policies, surviving by the expedient of a shaky pact with the Liberals, and vulnerable even to teacup storms like the Peter Jay affair, the Government was clearly in no shape to ride out a grave allegation against ministerial integrity. The letter apparently signed by Lord Ryder and splashed in the *Daily Mail* was the worst of bad news. The charges were unequivocal – British Leyland, now the virtual property of the National Enterprise Board, was engaging in massive bribery; Lord Ryder, appointed by Sir Harold Wilson to head the Board, knew and approved; Mr Varley, the minister responsible, knew and approved too. Had the letter been genuine, there would have been no defence. A vote of censure would surely have been carried in the House of Commons, followed by a general election which could only have ended in defeat for Labour.

The letter was a fake, and such a poor fake that mystified observers were soon asking how it could have deceived a man of the professional skill attributed to the *Mail*'s editor, Mr David English. He can, of course, plead that it was one item in a large dossier, the Barton reports. This argument, however, throws plenty of light on why the letter was selected as the centrepiece of the attack launched on 19 May. Had the *Mail* been primarily concerned to publicise the alleged slush fund, it could have chosen for its front page among dozens of documents in the Barton file. Indeed, when the dust has settled we ought not to forget that the issue of bribery (of which a *Sunday Times* investigation on 22 May was able to give shocking examples) remains a highly serious question. But the letter, and only the letter, implicated Lord Ryder and Mr Varley. Thus, it converted a scandal into a political detonator. The letter was accepted as genuine, not because any individuals at the *Daily Mail* are fools or slipshod, but because it was needed and therefore could not be objectively examined. The political animus is obvious when we find the *Mail* telling its readers that Mr Callaghan, by signing the statement agreed at the

economic summit which condemned bribery, was guilty of 'window dressing'. This could only imply that he, as well as Mr Varley, had condoned the slush fund.

'The root cause of this kind of bribery', declaimed the *Mail*, 'is state control' (of which, one might add, Lockheed is such an obvious example). It denounced 'the hypocritical face of socialism', trusting that few readers would recall the cupidity of Lord Duncan-Sandys, Mr Tiny Rowland, Mr Reggie Maudling, or sundry other Conservative businessmen. Of course, the most vindictive and unscrupulous enemy of socialism has always been the newspaper which printed the 'Red Letter' of 1924, lit the spark for the General Strike with a provocative editorial, and backed Mosley in the early 1930s. The *Mail* today, far more than the other Tory papers, is intimately linked with the political forces which have pushed the Conservative Party to the Right since Mrs Thatcher became leader. Were any Tory politicians, we wonder, involved in the plan to use the Leyland documents? Was the *Mail* team alone in choosing the famous letter as the desired weapon and stifling any doubts as to its authenticity? We may not know for a long time. More than 40 years passed before we knew about the role played by Conservative Central Office in the exploitation of the 'Red Letter'.

On 19 May the *Mail* was describing Lord Ryder as 'sleazy' and 'irretrievably stained' and making the peremptory demand: 'Lord Ryder must go.' That was before he had been given any chance to rebut or even see the charges made against him. When they turned out to be baseless, it did not seem to the *Mail*'s proprietor that Mr English was at all sleazy or stained, nor that his resignation should be accepted – that he should pay the price which a minister or public servant caught out in this flagrant manner would be paying. Consistency and humility were never the shining virtues of the Rothermere dynasty. But, in a democracy vitally dependent on popular access to honest information, the responsibility to obey rudimentary moral standards should be as real for press barons as for motor executives.

Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

Mr English Hits the Fan

'So I realise,' writes David English, the editor of the *Daily Mail*

there must be many people, who care for this paper, who are reacting with a whole range of emotions to last week's events. They must be disappointed, bewildered, uncomprehending, that the *Daily Mail* could – with its acknowledged high standards of professionalism – make such a mistake. Those are the emotions in this office among the people who write the paper and produce it. And I know how intensely they are shared throughout the country by the people who read it.

How true. How very true. And how very well put. There were times, in the last week, when I really thought the bottom had gone out of my life. I felt let down. I felt cheated. I felt – well, almost shattered.

And so I passed the weekend in a brown study. My friend Lobby Hack came round on Sunday. 'Hello,' he said airily, 'awfully nice brown study you've got here. Spend a lot of time in it, do you? . . . I say, is anything wrong?' 'Oh Lobby,' I sighed, 'I don't know how to put it. I feel so . . . and here my voice trailed away, my eyes misted over and I gazed abstractedly at the carpet. There was a moment of silence in the room, punctuated only by the buzzing of a fly in the window. My voice, when it resumed, had a curiously lifeless quality. I seemed drained of all emotion. 'It's strange,' I said, 'but I've never been like this before. I feel – how can I put it? – disappointed, bewildered . . . 'Uncomprehending, perhaps?' suggested Lobby. 'Yes, that's it,' I said, 'uncomprehending, that the *Daily Mail* could . . . 'With its acknowledged high standards of professionalism?' 'Lobby, you're a genius. That's precisely it – that the *Daily Mail* could, with its acknowledged high standards, have made such a mistake. Care for a cancer-stick?' 'Thanks,' said Lobby, helping himself, 'I'm trying to give them up. Tell me more about the way you feel your existence has been deprived of all meaning.'

Lobby could see that I was warming to the subject. For the first time, my eyes began to regain their old sparkle. I got up and began to pace excitedly about the room. 'It reminds me,' I said, 'of a story Gully Jimson tells, about this little dog who, every day, regular as clockwork, trots along Threadneedle Street and lifts its little leg against the Bank of England. And then one day it trots along, lifts its leg, and suddenly notices that the Bank of England has disappeared. Well that's how I feel.' Lobby looked puzzled. 'I mean,' I continued, 'something absolutely reliable, something I never for a moment had any doubts about, a fundamental feature of life – gone, vanished, disappeared in a puff of smoke.' 'The Bank of England?' 'No, Lobby, not the Bank of England, and not the *Daily Mail*,

but the *faith*, Lobby, the trust, the reliance. God knows, I'm no hero-worshipper. But I really respected that man. Fancy a gasper?' 'Thanks, I will,' said Lobby. 'You mean, you really respected David English?'

I paused for a moment to light our cigarettes. Then I inhaled deeply, and emitted a long thin jet of blue smoke. My face wore a look of intense concentration, as if every nerve was straining under the weight of what I was about to say. Somewhere in the distance, a game of cricket was being played. Lobby could hear the occasional applause of the spectators. 'You know,' I said finally, 'there are some people I wouldn't trust as far as I could throw them, people with neat hair-styles, fancy suits and horrid, plausible, boyish good looks.' 'Yes, well,' said Lobby, 'I suppose he does rather –' 'But David English isn't like that,' I went on, 'and you know – there are some people who would sell their grandmothers, to gain some frivolous advantage. There are some people who make you keep a firm hand on your wallet, or check the teaspoons. But David English isn't like that. There are some people who can follow you through a revolving door and come out ahead of you – but David English is not one of them. You look puzzled.'

'Well – I am, rather,' said Lobby Hack. 'Are you saying that he's a man of high principle, incapable of dissembling, with a warm and generous disposition, the sort of man who spends his time helping old ladies across roads, who lives simply, gives all his spare cash to charity, but never lets on where the donations come from?' 'I am,' I replied incisively, 'saying exactly that.' 'I see,' said Lobby. 'In that case, do you mind if I have another of these coffin-nails? I've been trying to give them up.' 'Tuck in,' I replied. It was Lobby's turn to look thoughtful. He lit the cigarette, took one puff, placed it in the ashtray, lit another cigarette and settled back. In the distance, he heard a faint 'Owzat', followed by a little ripple of applause. 'In that case,' he continued,

pensively, 'what you're saying is' – and here he tapped the cigarette for emphasis – 'it couldn't have happened to a nicer person. That's what you're saying.'

'That is,' I replied, 'precisely what I'm saying. You see, there are some people around who are going to be glad at what has happened. You know the sort of people I mean. Lord Ryder, Eric Varley, James Callaghan, Michael Foot, Tony Benn, Roy Hattersley, David Owen, Peter Jay . . . 'Yes,' said Lobby, 'I get your drift.' 'And Joan Lestor, Barbara Castle, Robert Kilroy-Silk, Eric Heffer, Jack Ashley, Joe Ashton . . . 'You mean, the majority of the PLP and the Labour Party at large?' 'Denis Healey, Dennis Skinner, John Watkinson, Stan Orme, Margaret Jackson, Russell Kerr, Arthur Bottomley . . . 'Yes, but –' . . . Phillip Whitehead . . . 'YES!' . . . Peter Preston, Ian Aitken, Simon Hoggart, Michael White, Simon Jenkins, Roy Wright, Tony Howard . . . 'All right, you've made your point. But still, there are some people in London who won't be absolutely delighted,' said Lobby Hack, with some exasperation. 'Yes indeed,' I replied, 'Margaret Thatcher, William Rees-Mogg, and myself.'

I opened a new paragraph for emphasis. 'In the case of the Mogg,' I said, 'the poor man has been made to look a bit of a chump, and this is something he will not easily forgive. In the case of Thatcher, we may imagine the lady's feelings. It is as if the prize had been snatched from her grasp. She knows that this Government is suffering badly. The slightest mishap, a common cold, for instance, could carry it off. Day after day she waits for such an event. In her pleasant room in the Commons, with its desk designed by Pugin and the Turkish rug on the floor, with a stream of visitors advising her on this and that, she waits for the moment. She must be sick of reading in the press that the next election will destroy Labour. On Thursday morning, she calls in Sir Keith Joseph, and they discuss the implications of the *Mail* story. They decide to be very careful (thank God) but nevertheless to exploit the opportunity that has arisen. Sir Keith is told to put down a private notice question, and they await with bated breath the confusion of poor Eric Varley.'

'But behold, something has gone terribly wrong. Varley does not appear in the slightest bit confused. His manner is as it always is, impenetrably composed. The nature of his reply leads everyone to ask the question: is Varley putting his head on the chopping block, or is he quite as innocent as he makes out? The wind changes. The *Mail* goes on the defensive, and circulates other newspapers with a photograph of Ryder's signature. But still it is clear that something is amiss. In the ensuing débâcle, Mrs Thatcher may well have asked herself whether perhaps there was not, after all, a guardian angel looking over this Government – preserving its sickly form, and warding off its enemies, giving it another chance, and then another chance, and then another chance again, telling her – yes, the inheritance may well be yours, but you are going to have to wait a long time, counselling caution, vigilance, and a careful choice of her friends.'

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Dev Murarka

Brezhnev Shows His Muscle

So Mr Brezhnev has finally taken the plunge. For months and years there has been talk of Brezhnev combining the position of head of state with his supreme party job. It so happens that the new constitution contains appropriate provisions for precisely this step and so suddenly Nikolai Podgorny finds himself out of a job. The triumvirate which has ruled the Soviet Union since early 1965 has now become a duumvirate – Brezhnev and Kosygin. True, for the moment Podgorny has been dropped from the Politburo alone, but it is a matter of days only before we see Mr Brezhnev triumphantly assuming his new role.

Whatever his critics may say, at home Brezhnev is going from strength to strength. That after some 12 years of effort he has been able to get a new constitution past all obstacles, all objections, is certainly a testimony to his political supremacy. One wonders, though, if he and his intimate advisers realise that this is likely to expose him to greater blame if something goes seriously wrong. And under the new constitution he may not so easily be able to ride rough-shod

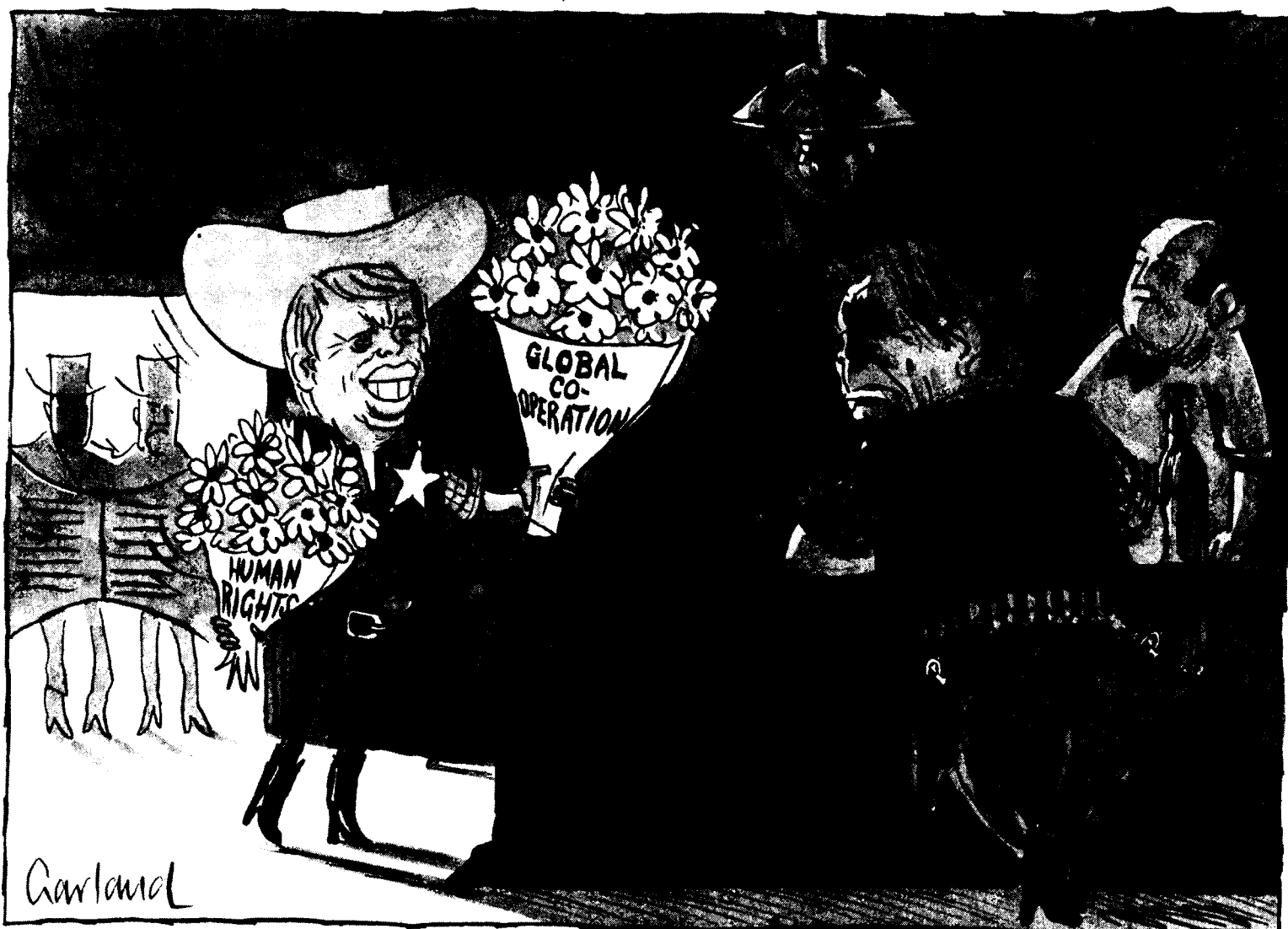
over any opposition. The timing of Brezhnev's action and its motivation, of course, will keep the Kremlinologists busy for months to come. We will have reams of stuff about power struggles in the Kremlin and all that nonsense. The truth is more prosaic. In Moscow it has been known for years that Mr Podgorny was on his way out. Indeed, even a few months ago it was strongly rumoured that he would be dropped – even though at that time it was not anticipated that Brezhnev would eventually succeed in assuming the two roles simultaneously.

It may, however, be worth recalling that way back in 1966 Brezhnev wanted a new constitution to be ready for the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution in 1967. He did not get it then because he was not strong enough to have his way; and for a few years all talk about the new constitution stopped. Brezhnev's own speech, which contained his reference to the matter, was even bowdlerised before being published. Around 1972-73 talk revived again, suggesting Brezhnev had not given up his

dream of bequeathing a Brezhnev constitution to the nation. Since then, again and again, the unveiling of the new constitution was rumoured – for instance at the time of the 25th party congress in February 1976. But it failed to materialise. Somewhere in the corridors of the Kremlin some sort of trial of strength must certainly have been going on.

Mr Podgorny's rather unceremonious exit from the Politburo suggests that he was perhaps not quite enamoured of the new constitution. The communiqué of the Central Committee does not even have the softening formula that he was retired from that August body – the Politburo – at his own request. It is straightforward dismissal, and that is that. No thanks for the 12 years of service as head of the state and of the supreme Soviet, as a close colleague and comrade. Such sentimental touches are for bourgeois politics, not for a proletarian internationalist regime.

Nevertheless, the significance of Podgorny's dismissal is greater than the event itself. It suggests, to begin with, that Brezhnev is already beginning to think in terms of his own heir. The ground has shifted at the top and there may well be more sudden changes in store. It is even possible that Podgorny's fall marks the beginning of a period of interregnum between Brezhnev and his successor. To describe it as a process of 'clearing the decks' would, no doubt, be unnecessarily crude – but one cannot



'There comes a time when a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do'

rule out a chain reaction now developing in the Soviet Union's power structure. What Brezhnev, in fact, has done is to use his strength in order to make his own dispositions for the future. In that sense Podgorny's exit is probably best seen not as an end but as a beginning – the beginning of an orderly transition into the post-Brezhnev era. Other changes at lower levels certainly suggest that something of this sort is happening, even if it is only that Brezhnev's own men are taking more and more commanding positions. The appointment of Konstantin Rusakov as secretary of the Central Committee in charge of relations with communist countries is one such change. Rusakov has been Brezhnev's personal assistant since 1972 and before that he was deputy to Konstantin Katushev, who has now ceased to be a secretary of the Party and has purely governmental functions.

It would be wrong, however, to presume that this is the end of Katushev; in fact, he remains a serious candidate for the job of the Prime Minister when Mr Kosygin finally moves from that office. In addition, one change which has not gone unnoticed, though as yet unpublished, is the appointment of Yevgeny Tyzhelnikov as head of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee. He is already functioning in that capacity, though formally he is still first secretary of the Komsomol (Communist Youth League). It is significant that Tyzhelnikov has been appointed to a post which has been vacant since the spring of 1970. The filling of such a key job after such a long time underlines that Podgorny's removal should not be judged in isolation.

Another significant aspect of the matter is that Brezhnev, though by no means an anti-Stalinist in the Khrushchevian sense, does now appear anxious to close that chapter of Soviet history. The promotion of a new constitution in place of the 1936 Stalin constitution, the composition and approval of a new national anthem in place of the old Stalinist one whose words could not be used because they constituted too fulsome a tribute to Stalin, are signals that Brezhnev is paying far more attention to the image of the Soviet Union than he did before. Undoubtedly, he expects personal credit, too – both from history and from his people.

The interesting thing is that Brezhnev, a natural conservative, should feel compelled to undertake this task. Of course, it is easy to dismiss all his efforts as an exercise in public relations; it is also virtually a foregone conclusion that the more hard-boiled critics of the Soviet Union will dismiss the more liberal provisions of the new constitution as irrelevant, an empty gesture to the Helsinki declaration.

But for Brezhnev himself the matter is neither so simple nor so light. He has fought hard for his constitution not merely to earn a page in the history books but also because he seems to feel that this would be his crowning contribution to the stabilisation of the country. This is why he has taken the risky ideological step of proclaiming, according to the communiqué of the Central Committee, that the Soviet Union has now become 'a state of the entire people'. This is certainly an advance in the

liberal direction from the definition of the Soviet state as being one of 'workers and peasants' (the phrase in the old Stalin constitution). It is, perhaps, salutary to remember that it was that 'unperson' Khrushchev who spoke of 'the state of the entire people' and for some time after his exit the phrase was shunned like the plague and remained in limbo.

That after more than a decade the Soviet

leaders should have returned to this formulation shows that their room for manoeuvre on such ideological matters is still the same and still very small. No one, of course, will do it – and no one will dare to mention his name – but perhaps Khrushchev deserves to be given at least part of the credit for what Brezhnev plainly intends history to see as his memorial.

Moscow

Neal Ascherson

Spring in Guernica

Writing about the 'Basque Spring' from Guernica is like writing about Dubcek's Czechoslovakia from Lidice. But the mixture of new hope and old pain is even more intense. Lidice, in 1968, had been granted nearly a quarter-century of public sympathy and honour. Guernica has been forced to live for 40 years under the lie that it was destroyed by retreating Republican troops. The people of this small town of harsh new buildings have become famous for their taciturnity and inwardness, their reluctance – even when the regime of Franco began to weaken – to talk about the day when the Nazi bombers came in April 1937, or to join any of the free political parties as they emerged. The psychosis of the 'Terrorangriff' is only now dissolving.

But Guernica came awake last Sunday. Five thousand people made their way to the sports stadium, where the Basque National Party (PNV) had promised that speakers from other 'unrepresented nations' in Europe would pledge their support to the Basque cause. They were disappointed. The flags of Scotland, Wales, Brittany and Alsace were flying beside the 'Ikurrina', the red-white-green ensign of the free Basques, but the foreigners did no more than stand up dumbly and wave. A flowery letter from the civil governor of Vizcaya ('May God protect you and grant your honour many years', he ended consolingly) had forbidden them to open their mouths.

What none the less took place was a festival of heresy, a fundamental challenge to the centralised Spanish state. Catalans had come, a 12-stone socialist and a bespectacled Christian Democrat. There was an elderly professor representing the movement for autonomy in Galicia. And there appeared uninvited a bearded boy handing around stickers for the 'Nationalist Council of Asturias'. Nobody had heard of this body, but he was cheerfully given a seat on the platform.

But it was exultant Basque nationalism

which held the stage. The audience stood to roar out the old forbidden hymns and songs of the Civil War; the band of schoolgirls in the national green-and-white checked tunic squeaked and banged on recorder and drum: a wizened bard sang extempore verses between the speeches. His art had been banned too, but now he sang of the bombing and urged the orators to put more passion into their work. A man from Guernica said that Picasso's picture must come to this town, if it were to find any new home. The last speaker was old Juan Ajuriaguerra, who took part in one of the terrible decisions of European history. Franco said in 1938 that he would halt the mass shooting of Basque prisoners of war if the Basque government in exile agreed to dissolve. Ajuriaguerra, himself a prisoner in the death cells at Burgos, was among the condemned men who sent out the message that the price must not be paid. He survived, but thousands of others did not.

After the meeting, they poured down to an open-air banquet in a tree-shaded square. There was wine – and toasts and songs: the chants of 'Gora Euzkadi Askatuta! (long live the free Basque nation) became 'Gora Escocia', and 'Gora Galia'. The girls began to dance furious reels in the square, their hair flying. At the tables, the people pressed round the returned exiles, old soldiers back from Latin America, Belgium, France or the States, with sons and daughters born in Caracas or Antwerp who never saw Euzkadi until this year.

The first general election for 40 years comes on 15 June, and the 'suppressed nations' festival at Guernica was not just a successful attempt to warm the frozen heart of the town. It was clever electioneering too. The PNV is trying to demonstrate its legitimacy as the main carrier of Euzkadi nationalism by proving that it can furnish the Basque cause with outside allies, and secure it as an accepted member in a wider movement of smaller nationalities in Europe.

Politically, the PNV is the oldest and by far the largest nationalist party – is vaguely social-democrat. The problems of economic self government – the ownership of heavy industry around Bilbao by a small group of Basque capitalists who look towards Madrid, or the two great banks based in Bilbao which extend their business and holdings throughout the Spanish economy –

NEXT WEEK

Anti-Jubilee Number

A critical examination of the role of the monarchy in Britain today

tend to be left alone. The party's 1977 declaration of principles speaks of 'socialisation', which means sharing out control between employees and local authorities rather than nationalisation. Internally, the party insists upon decentralisation in the tradition of 'Basque communalism': all deputies to the Cortes, all mayors or ministers in a future Euzkadi will have to lay down their posts in the PNV hierarchy. Each provincial organisation of the PNV is autonomous, and the party has no effective central leadership.

Next month's elections will probably give the right a small absolute majority in the lower house at Madrid. But the PNV hopes that an effective alliance to press for Basque and Catalan autonomy can be formed, with the help of the Communists, the Socialists (PSOE), the Christian Democrats, and autonomists from Valencia and Galicia. Grinding its teeth, the PNV may accept temporarily a statute of autonomy applying only to Vizcaya and Guipuzcoa and not to the Basque provinces of Navarre and Alave, where nationalism is less strong. Navarre, granted substantial financial self-government by Franco as a reward for fighting against the Basque government in 1936-7, may remain in its Carlism, a creed so queer as to defy brief description. Unamuno said that the Carlist was 'a mountain animal with a red crest which attacks man after taking Communion'. The Carlist candidate, Prince Carlos Hugo, glares down from posters in the beret and jerkin of a mountain guerrilla.

But the PNV's real rival is ETA. The fighters of ETA, dedicated to full revolutionary independence, will maintain guerrilla war even if all the Basque political prisoners are freed, and with the support of a proliferation of far-left groups are calling for a boycott of the elections. The PNV fear that a boycott could be just effective enough to damage its chances, and that continued violence might provoke Madrid to impose a state of siege in the Basque provinces and ban the election campaign. So far, even after more police killings and the kidnapping of the generally detested Bilbao tycoon Javier Ybarra, the Government has kept its head and continued to release prisoners, marginally weakening the boycott partnership. The PNV speakers at Guernica denounced 'the suicidal policy of all or nothing', and one of them declared: 'We don't accept that we should buy the freedom of our prisoners in exchange for the deaths of our own people.'

With its linguistic nationalism and its heavy industry and mining, Euzkadi recalls Wales. The PNV, large and cautious, has resemblances to the SNP. The parallel the Basques hate is Ireland. Could the mass party and the guerrillas, each with their place in the heart of the people, find themselves in conflict when and if the PNV comes to power in a self-governing Euzkadi? Could ETA, after killing Spanish policemen, find itself firing on a Basque police force? There is a 'Basque Spring' now, a blissful handling of liberty. A deadly split between Basques, and the military coup at Madrid which such a conflict might encourage, could turn Guernica back into its silence once more.

Guernica

An Open Letter to Tony Benn

My dear Tony,

Before putting to you a suggestion you may find impertinent or even unfair, let me explain why I find it necessary to make it. In my judgment you are by far the ablest and most valuable politician in the Labour Party. Like the late Dick Crossman, you have a genuinely original and creative mind, and you are constantly looking for new approaches to old, intractable problems. But, unlike Dick, you understand how British politics work, you are a master of its many difficult skills, you see the need to win friends and influence people and to operate from a strong political base – in short, you rightly put political professionalism high on your list of commendable public virtues. This combination of creativity and professionalism is rare on the Left – more's the pity. But, in addition, and this is what I like about you best of all, you have an absolute faith in democracy. You actually believe, and do not merely profess it, that ordinary men and women should be brought as fully as possible into the whole process whereby public policy is decided and carried through; you dislike hole-and-corner government, the nudge-and-wink of the lobby system, the stench of privilege and patronage which clings around Westminster and Whitehall, especially (I am sorry to say) when Labour is in office. You are the exact opposite of a Tammany Hall practitioner.

Now, it is precisely because you possess this wide range of qualities, and because I want to see you leader of the Labour Party – possibly in the quite near future – that I am anxious you should withdraw your support from the hideous shambles of the Callaghan government. I know you are 'not the resigning sort'. You enjoy your work at the Department of Energy, which is very important; and you do it well. But there are wider issues. This Government is branded with the double mark of Cain: it is the antithesis of socialist idealism; and

it has an unparalleled reputation for incompetence. It seems to me that no socialist who intends to lead the party and rebuild its morale can continue to be associated with Tammany Jim's regime. The unedifying episode of Peter Jay and Ambassador Ramsbotham, though intrinsically unimportant, was wholly characteristic of the Downing Street set-up – the exaltation of privilege combined with gross ineptitude. For a socialist it was (how shall I put it?) the last cheese straw.

You know, and I know – and a growing number of party workers know – that things are not going to get any better. The Government is impotent. It cannot legislate. It cannot even take day-to-day decisions with the freedom any normal government expects. It is terrified of the electorate, even in its safest seats. Wedged between the International Monetary Fund on the one hand, and the trade union magnates on the other, it now has to grovel to a wretched handful of Liberals to ensure its mere survival. Even so, it is almost certainly doomed to ignominious defeat. No informed and sensible person believes the myth that Labour will be 'saved by the oil'. The oil is coming in; but the problem does not lie primarily in the balance of payments. It lies in the unique combination of high unemployment and surging prices. Here, matters are getting worse – with many more price rises still in the pipeline. You know that we are not going to get a satisfactory Stage Three: maybe no Stage Three at all. The union leaders, with the best will in the world – and there is, in fact, precious little goodwill left – cannot hold back their members. I don't intend to predict exactly how the Callaghan government will collapse, but it is clearly going to be mighty unpleasant, and it may be imminent. I would like to see you well clear of the coming débâcle, as Aneurin Bevan contrived to be in 1951.

If you resigned now, you would not only express your disapprobation of what has been done but, more important, you would be able to concentrate on what ought to have been done – to endeavour to teach the party how to avoid the mistakes of the last three years, and how to prepare itself for a more fruitful and dynamic period of office under your leadership. In particular, you could devote yourself to the problem which lies at the heart of our maladies and which must be solved if we are to have any hope of a prosperous future – how to develop a workable system of industrial democracy.

For instance, to pick on a practical issue which affects the performance of more than half our manufacturing industry, is there a socialist solution to the problem of over-manning? The policy pursued by the present Government, which oscillates violently between subsidising inefficiency and low productivity, and therefore mortgaging the future and permitting abrupt closures of plants, gets the worst of all worlds. There must be a more civilised and sensible way of doing it. As we know from bitter experience in the newspaper industry, overman-

WHAT A NERVE -
STILL RUNNING A
LETTERS COLUMN



ning, once firmly rooted, resists almost any remedy. But it is precisely because it is so intractable that socialists who believe in industrial democracy must tackle it, or lose confidence in their whole theory.

Then again, ending overmanning by a process of democratic consultation leads us to the whole process of worker participation. Here the Bullock Report was no use at all; indeed it was worse than useless. By asserting, virtually without solid argument, that the only acceptable form of worker representation in management was by an authoritarian system run by trade union bureaucrats, it turned what might have been a sophisticated discussion into a bitter political slanging-match, poisoned the wells of truth and, in the eyes of many, discredited the whole idea of workers in the boardroom. The shrill tone of the Report was particularly unfortunate in that a number of unions, for a variety of reasons, hotly oppose its main recommendations, as we were reminded by an excellent editorial in the *Guardian* last week. The Government mutters that it still intends to implement them, but parliamentary arithmetic simply does not permit legislation on Bullock lines, or indeed any Bill not based on a real consensus. So all is to do again: and you are the man to do it. Anyone who can devise a system which allows democratically-chosen workers a real say in the overall policy of their firms, which at the same time is welcome to management and investors, and sufficiently flexible to work smoothly over the whole spectrum of British industry, will have a real claim to be considered a statesman.

This brings me to my final point. What Britain so badly needs is not party warfare and class division, but statesmanship, a form of vision which treats the country as a commonwealth, and not a series of factions and special interests. The next leader of the Labour Party, I believe, ought to speak with a far more ecumenical voice than in the past. Here again, the key is true democracy. There is something anomalous, is there not, in undertaking a vast programme to establish workers in British boardrooms, if democracy is still a frail and neglected plant in some other areas of our national life? It is, for instance, disgraceful that the arrogance (as well as the numbers) of the bureaucrats, at both central and local government levels, should have notably increased under Labour rule. It is, to my mind, quite wrong that wages should be nationally determined not by any process of consultation, not by any consideration of the social value of the work performed, but by a handful of powerful trade union leaders sitting in secret conclave with senior ministers. Again, it is wrong that the mightiest of these union leaders, for instance, should be elected by less than half of a 38-per-cent poll of members, to an office he holds for life. It is wrong, too, that both in the trade union movement and in Labour's constituency parties, power can easily slip into the hands of tiny, highly organised groups of unscrupulous men and women – whose ultimate aim, often enough, is to end the democratic system itself.

These are big issues, covering an immensely wide field. I do not say that you will be able to devise solutions to all of

them, or even most of them. But you can make a start; and, in doing so, in trying to point the Labour Party back in the direction of true social democracy, you will get it thinking again, you will revive the desperately flagging spirits of its hardcore militants, you will recuperate those who have deserted in disgust; you may even help to

avoid an electoral massacre. If you cannot now save the Government – no one can – you can save the party's soul. But of course none of this can be done while you are still associated with the Downing Street flesh-pots.

Yours ever,
PAUL JOHNSON

Phillip Whitehead

Annan: The Debate That Isn't

'My Lords, I declare my interest as a director of Mammon Television Ltd. and of Megalopolis Radio Ltd. May I say at the outset how grateful we all are to Lord Annan and his committee for their stimulating and well-marshalled Report, which is of course a massive vote of confidence in the best broadcasting system in the world? There is much wisdom in this Report, but alas in the area of our own activities its conclusions fall short of the high standard of its argument . . . ' Thus the debate on Annan, so far, a debate which has not yet engaged the public mind, or moved beyond the clash of vested interests.

With a month to go before the public representations to the Home Secretary are due to be in, it is a fair bet that most of the submissions received will be exactly that special pleading which, quite properly, has already been put to the committee, and was considered in its Report. What has been striking about the public debate, mediated through the broadcasting organisations and reflected in Parliament, has been its acute defensiveness. Indeed, the various television programmes have been so laced with spokesmen for the status quo that they must have produced a bad case of viewers' droop in the ratings. The committee had to look at the whole future of broadcasting over the next 15 years, and to work out the logic of how it might best develop within the principles of editorial independence, public accountability and involvement, diversity and flexibility. That meant encouraging the existing organisations to do that which they do best, and encouraging new ones that will do many new things better.

A solemn procession of Lords from the boards and heavily-briefed MPs have inveighed against this. With the single exception of Mr John Thompson of the IBA no member of the great broadcasting institutions has dared to step out of line in their well-orchestrated campaign against 'pie-in-the-sky', 'more costly bureaucracies' (this from Sir Michael Swann, among others, who presides over the biggest broadcasting bureaucracy of all!), and 'jam tomorrow' instead of the ITV-2 jam today. The BBC is to be cut off from its roots in local radio (which it miraculously grew 40 years after its stem) and the creative workers of ITV prevented from furnishing the 'empty room' of the fourth television channel. Behind this wealth of homely domestic metaphor, various scribes have excelled them-

selves in hyperbole, and occasionally even hysteria. The Radio London manager writing in to praise the 'witty comment and erudite analysis' of his election results programme in last week's NS must yield pride of place to Mr Brian Wenham in the *Listener*. In the course of some pages of close textual analysis of p. 92 of the Report he remarks: 'If BBC programmes are flourishing at the moment – and they are – it is because the ten or so editors of 1977 are all individually well suited to the programmes they now edit, and are all confidently moving them forwards along distinct lines.' Yes. Prolonged and sustained applause, as they say in Bulgaria.

That there are inconsistencies, even perhaps inaccuracies, to be discovered in Annan I do not doubt, though there are few inconsistencies so glaring as describing a Report as masterly – except where it deals with oneself. Annan looked to the future, and has enraged those who are unwilling to share facilities which they cannot control. But there are real questions to be asked arising out of the Report, if few have bothered to ask them. Is the BBC to go on being financed by licence fees, as Annan recommended, for all its services? How would competition between two BBC and two ITV television channels differ from a service in which the fourth channel was not being used as a weapon in the audience-building game, but as a supplement to what we have now? Are a number of small bureaucracies better than a few large ones, and – whether you answer yes or no – how do we reduce that of the BBC? What would be the links between ITV companies and the proposed Open Broadcasting Authority, and the BBC and community radio stations, which stopped short of hegemony? What is the order in which decisions about the new technologies should be taken?

Annan did not look forward simply from a perverse desire to put all tomorrow's jam into the pie in the sky. It acknowledged that the community's needs and perceptions about broadcasting are themselves changing, with greater familiarity, greater awareness. Because these perceptions are not expressed in well-organised letter writing campaigns' MPs and peers alike have seemed indifferent to them in the recent debates. Thus every MP can welcome the idea of a Complaints Board, to which he can see himself complaining, or referring constituents. But mention a Public Inquiry Board at which the public in general could periodically help to



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review the performance of a broadcasting authority – ah, that is bureaucracy! Equally in local radio, everyone who has appeared on his local station can be rallied in defence of it, his flesh creeping with the Radio London manager's warning: 'If Annan has his way we may be indistinguishable from the commercial stations next year.' But is there no excluded element, in this progression two-by-two of miniature Broadcasting Houses and commercial companies plunked down in the luckier towns?

In this area, the debate has actually begun. The Community Communications Group, who include such notable cable pioneers as Peter Lewis and Richard Dunn, have come out for a Local Broadcasting Authority, although they do not want local advertising to be the main source of its

stations' revenue. The former BBC Radio Stoke manager, David Harding, who has described the Corporation's ambitions in this field as 'colonial radio' has also called for community-owned services which cover communities of interest as well as geography, such as the black community in London. Different from BBC Radio London, yes. Distinguishable from commercial London radio as we now have it, certainly. All Annan was trying to do was to hand to the citizen body, should they so will it, different ways of doing more things than the present structures, good though many of their products are, can allow. They should not be indifferent to the fact that the vested interests in our present system are trying not merely to lock up the argument, but to foreclose on the real estate as well.

Naomi Shepherd

Why Israel Moved Right

How can a country with so strong a socialist image have put itself in the hands of a right-wing political force? That is the question being asked in all countries which regard themselves as basically social democracies: but the right-wing opposition in Israel has never been the equivalent of its European counterparts. Its leaders do not today represent vested interests, or a specific class or group. Labour, on the contrary, with its control of vital ministries and trade union industries, and its ideological centre in the privileged kibbutzim and moshavim, increasingly came to represent vested interests and Establishment perks. Over the years the Likud drew its support increasingly from the new working class, the urban proletariat in the big cities and development towns who were overwhelmingly of oriental origin, and whose higher birth-rate was bound gradually to make them a formidable electoral force. Labour's loss of grass-roots in these areas, the discontents of disadvantaged groups in their midst and the tendency of oriental groups to fear and mistrust the Arab states from which they were expelled all contribute to make them a steady source of gradually increasing right-wing power.

Labour's ability to fight back as a strong Opposition will depend primarily on the results of the Histadrut elections on 21 June. The same confusion of class interests obtains on the trade union as on the political front. The Likud leaders in the Histadrut behind Herut's David Levi have been the most vocal opponents of trade union discipline, supporting every wildcat strike and demanding every penny of each cost of living allowance in defiance of Government-Histadrut efforts to keep wage claims down. How this will square with the Likud's anti-inflationary drive and classic right-wing economic policies is anyone's guess. But Labour's current campaign for the Histadrut does not show they have learned the lesson of the Knesset elections. By putting the same ineffectual candidate

up for office in the face of a strong challenge from the DMC's Meir Amit, ex-head of the Histadrut giant KUR industrial complex, and by the lack of a strong grass roots campaigning effort, Labour may face a similar defeat on the trade union front to the one it has already suffered politically. This could presage a long period for Labour in the wilderness.

Labour's failures over the past few months have been predominantly those of personalities rather than of policies, of a loss of political will rather than an ignorance of possible options. Labour's leaders have been engaged in a constant internal battle for power, and rivalries and naked expediency dictated almost all political appointments – all this in full and unashamed view of the electorate. The appointment of Asher Yadlin to the governorship of the Bank of Israel (even before his criminal activities were unveiled) was a patent mistake, motivated by fear that he would pass from Rabin to the Peres camp. Yosef Almogi's appointment to the Jewish Agency directorship was dictated by political expediency so crude that it even lost Labour the Haifa hegemony it was intended to ensure.

In foreign policy the Alignment proved unable to make its own decisions: even the mention of territorial concessions in the electoral platform was forced on it by Mapam, which, in its turn, backed down from the threat to resign if Peres became Prime Minister. Hard-line economic policies were proposed by highly qualified economists and abandoned in mid-career. Wage policy collapsed, basic services were sabotaged by strikes, and the Government was torn apart by revelations of abuses of power and corruption it had pledged itself to root out. Most of all, there seemed no Labour leader prepared to put himself on the line for a principle or capable of facing a confrontation of any kind. For the electorate to have returned Labour to office would have been a confession of impotence.

What has happened now is, as one rueful Labour man said last week, 'a classic case of political overkill'. The Israeli voter has now conferred power on a group of men whose fanatical certainties on questions of foreign policy are only equalled by their reckless drive to reform at home. There may be no lack of decisiveness here. The question is only whether the decisions are what the voters had in mind.

Two paradoxes of Israeli politics. One: the moderate voters have put an extremist government into power. Two: the working-class vote has put men into government who now promise an economic policy which can only militate against working-class interests. The Alignment and the Likud were running on a similar economic platform of promises: a reduction of inflation, increased welfare allowances, reduction in service sectors, increase in exports and so on. However, the Likud will introduce at least two classic right-wing formulae: compulsory arbitration against strikes, and controlled unemployment. Moreover the anti-inflationary drive of the Likud seems bound to cause a drop in real wages for the lower ranks of Labour, and the reduction of government expenditure will make it difficult to pay for election promises such as a guaranteed minimum income, the equalisation of social benefits for all workers, a long school day and more. Prices may well rise as a result of continuing devaluation and drastic cuts in subsidies on basic food-stuffs. The Likud economists have not yet explained, in other words, how a laissez-faire economy over which they have invited Professor Milton Friedman to preside can be squared with the benefits promised to their working-class supporters, though it may well cheer their middle-class leadership.

Israeli liberals are seriously disturbed at the prospect of a Likud-Religious coalition which already contemplates several regressive measures: for instances, the ultra orthodox Agudat-Israel Party wants to repeal the recently passed abortion law, and the Religious Party to legislate for a narrower definition of Jewish identity; while the Likud aims at more rigidly nationalist and bible-based curricular even in the state secular schools.

But most disturbing of all the new developments promised by the new Government is the hard line on territorial concessions and the consequent risk of a serious breach in Israel-American relations. Here Mr Begin has done nothing to assuage anyone's fears. Since his victory he has affirmed his dedication to the principle of West Bank settlement, and brushed aside the possibility of American opposition with the blithe assertion that a rapid propaganda campaign would ensure Washington's willing support for the justice of the Likud cause.

On the same day that President Carter at Notre Dame University said that America would not allow anti-Soviet passions to encourage alliances with unsuitable partners, Mr Begin was representing for the umpteenth time the joint interest of Israel and America in an anti-Soviet crusade in which the first step was Israeli retention of the West Bank. Mr Begin enraged many Israelis when he stated that he regarded his role as Prime



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‘Some developing countries do not have the means to eliminate or even diminish the severe deprivations of the present and cannot, without help, raise the living standards of their people or look forward to an acceptable rate of economic growth in the future.’

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As a matter of principle, most national and international development agencies avoid responsibility for managing projects in which they invest. Exceptionally, CDC offers management and technical services for certain types of projects in which it has specialised over

the past 25 years, e.g. development of renewable natural resources, especially projects providing help for the small farmer; industrial development finance companies and house mortgage finance companies. Established CDC-managed projects act as nurseries for training managers of the future, both indigenous and expatriate.

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1976 results

1976 was a year of solid achievement for on-going CDC projects. A surplus of £102,390 was appropriated to Reserve Fund after charging administration costs and Treasury interest, provisions against book value of projects and taxation.

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Minister as less important than his pre-1948 role as an underground fighter, and annoyed his liberal partners in the Likud by demanding the Foreign Ministry portfolio as well as that of Prime Minister. If his erratic health, indicated by his collapse this week, prevents his accession to power, the leadership will fall on either Simcha Ehrlich, Liberal leader and potential Finance Minister, or Ezer Weizmann, now slated as Defence Minister.

Whether or not Mr Begin accedes to power to fight 30-year-old battles anew, the flexibility of the Likud government will depend essentially on whether it is joined by the DMC, which may now see its role as that of curbing a slide into isolationism potentially disastrous to Israel. However, this would prevent a strong DMC-Labour Opposition, which alone seems to promise Labour regeneration and in which Labour would cede key positions to its defectors in the new party. Mr Rabin's renewed attempt to unseat Mr Peres as party leader this week indicates that Labour has not learned much from its richly deserved defeat. For Israel's sake, new leaders must now assert themselves or risk seeing Israel slide helplessly towards war.

Jerusalem

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Lucas – Most British of Companies

This August 1,100 workers from three Lucas Aerospace plants in Liverpool, Birmingham and Burnley are to experience the bite in Callaghan's remark that 'the greatest differential of all' is between employment and the dole. If you include this latest batch, nearly one third of the 18,000 jobs which existed in 1970 at Lucas Aerospace will have disappeared. A subsidiary of one of Britain's ponderous multi-nationals, Lucas Industry Ltd, which employs 80,000 people in all, Lucas Aerospace is Europe's largest designer and manufacturer of aircraft systems and equipment. About 45 per cent of its work comes from Rolls-Royce and 27 per cent from the Ministry of Defence. As such, its highly sophisticated engineers are vulnerable to reductions in the level of British military defence expenditure. However, what makes these particular redundancies anything more than another marker in the emaciation of Britain's manufacturing base is that not only did the Lucas Aerospace shop-stewards' combine committee long ago foresee further sackings, but they also provided the Lucas board with an alternative to them.

Faced with the rise in oil prices, the rationalisation of EEC aerospace production in which Britain was disproportionately involved (despite 100,000 jobs lost in the industry since 1960), it was clear that Lucas Aerospace needed to diversify. The combine, representing 17 different plants and the whole gamut of manual and skilled workers in the 13 different unions, was politically opposed to encouraging more defence expenditure. The belated occupation of a factory, for the products of which there was no demand, seemed somehow uninspirational.

In November 1974, in the heady age of cooperatives, the combine went to see Tony Benn. He suggested that the workforce should prepare their own diversification programme for the company. The dedication with which that combine took up the challenge has won praise from a bizarre chorus including Swedish TV, the Open University, the Labour Party Programme '76, the *Engineer*, and the journal of English Dominicans. Other British combines have pricked up their ears as well.

What the Lucas Combine first did was to seek suggestions for alternative products from 180 academics and institutions regarded as authorities on the 'humanisation of industry'. The 180 came up with precisely three ideas. Undeterred, the combine then prepared an elaborate questionnaire, distributed through the plant shop-steward committees, requesting an analysis of the skills and the machinery available and applicable to alternative products. The questionnaire was 'phrased dialectically' to make the workers think about their skills and equipment, both as producers and consumers. Some workers recognised only a pragmatic need to diversify; others were more ideo-

logical. The aim of the corporate plan was not just to defend the men's right to work but also to produce socially useful goods of a kind which both in their production and consumption did not replace human intelligence by machine intelligence.

During 1975, working largely in their spare time, the workforce amassed 150 high-technology potential products. These were refined down into six 200-page volumes of technical and economic data, representing oceanics, telechiric machines, transport and braking systems, medical equipment and alternative energy sources. Only the last has been fully released for fear that the management would pick up the money-spinners but neglect the socially useful products. The combine does not want to turn into a free management consultancy. Twelve product areas were selected which related most directly to the skill of its members and to the manufacturing facilities at each site. They were also selected to achieve a balance of long- and short-term projects, projects of direct use in this country and for developing countries, products which required a high capital investment and those which could be produced almost immediately.

The specialist journals did not fault the technical quality of the work. To the layman the breadth and potential of their products is remarkable. They include adapted retarder braking systems for use on trains and coaches; wind generators and heat pumps; a lightweight car running on pneumatic tyres capable of travelling through cities on normal roads and then travelling directly on to normal railtracks; a new prime mover for vehicles using both the internal combustion engine and an electrical motor which would halve fuel consumption and reduce pollution by up to 80 per cent. The combine with the trades councils has already stopped the company selling off its kidney-machine division abroad. It has also produced mini-corporate plans on two sites. At Hemel Hempstead they so graphically exposed the errors behind the decision to close down industrial ballscrew production and lay off 200 workers that Lord Beswick, then at the Department of Industry, described it as the 'most impressive piece of work from trade unionists I have seen'. The management bowed to the workers' analysis, rescinded the sackings and rearranged the production.

However, after the major corporate plan was published in January 1976 the management had had enough unsolicited advice. Three months later in a generalised 26-page rejoinder the board foresaw no structural unemployment or need to diversify. Nor, as the combine put it, were they lured by the thought of becoming 'an island of responsibility in a sea of depravity'. Military aircraft production was adjudged to have a social utility. The only way to secure jobs in a

market economy was to manufacture products which the company was best at making efficiently and profitably. But Lucas is not operating in a market economy; 76 per cent of their contracts come from the Government. It is largely government policy that makes their products unprofitable or otherwise. There is, after all, nothing intrinsically profitable in Harrier Aircraft machinery.

After the outright rejection, keeping the combine's ideas alive last year was not easy. The management suddenly refused to recognise it any longer, which meant, conveniently, that no discussions could be held with the authors of the plan. The combine was regarded as unrepresentative and its leadership based only on one of the smaller plants (which is an odd disqualification, since 70 shop stewards from the combine from all 13 different site locations were lobbying MPs on behalf of the plan last March). More plausibly, it was argued that talking to the combine might offend national trade unions officials. Multinational conglomerates, of course, are past masters at playing the game of 'divide and rule'. But combines representing all of a company's plants have emerged in the last few years precisely because they are a more relevant form of dealing with big multinationals than the archaic divisions of trades unions. By 1975 15 combines were recognised among the large multinationals, though there are now many more meeting on different levels of formality. The Lucas combine is the most organised and articulate of them all. As such the management are keen to discourage it by any ploy such as offering a combine exclusively for manual workers, or discouraging ASTMS from using an AUEW member as their pensions' negotiator, since he is 'only a welder'.

The means available to a multinational to discourage a combine do not end there. In April of this year, to smooth over French business opinion, Jean Maxime Lévêque, chairman of Crédit Commercial de France, was appointed to the main board of what *The Times* described as 'apparently the most British of companies'. Despite a £31m. gift from the British Government in deferred tax payments intended to encourage investment here, Lucas Aerospace is busily expanding its production in France through a company called Auxilec. Lucas now has ten companies employing 10,000 people in France – and no meddling combines.

You may have noticed in all this that one party has seemingly lapsed into silence. The studied detachment (post-Benn) of the Department of Industry over the combine's plans fits uneasily with the Labour Party's commitment to increase the accountability of British companies and to 'fundamentally shift' industrial power to working people. The correspondence which has trotted back and forth between the TUC, DoI, and the combine since December 1975, a year before redundancies were announced, is a tribute to nothing but the white-hot heat of bureaucracy. The only 'fundamental shift' has been that of responsibility. The TUC would not become involved; it is a company affair. NEDC could not discuss it because aerospace did not fall under any of the 39 sector working parties identified under the industrial strategy. It was not Parliamentary

Under-Secretary Bob Cryer's department – he could step in only if the small firms that supplied components to Lucas wanted help – while Gerald Kaufman, who had DoI responsibility for Aerospace, was 'firmly of the view that the proper place for the examination of your ideas must be within the normal machinery of the company'.

In other words, the Government would not help unless the company would allow them to do so under a voluntary planning agreement or some such other chimera. Les Huckfield, also at DoI, was at least less evasive on the central question of who was to represent the work force in any negotiation with the company about the corporate plan. On 4 April, a year after the company's rejection, in a letter to Christopher Price MP, he argued apparently without a blush:

My understanding is that the more promising ideas put forward in the corporate plan are in fact already being discussed within the works council structure that has been set up in various Lucas Aerospace divisions. If there is a feeling (*sic*) that some of the suggestions are not getting a fair hearing, then the work force would have (*sic*) a strong case which they could take up through their established union organisations directly with management.

It is possible that Huckfield is not aware that established union organisations are suspicious of combine committees, or that the introduction of works councils, which are contrary both to TUC and Labour Party policy, is intended to break up the combine. But it ought to have trickled through

to DoI by now that there simply aren't any serious negotiations being carried out by Lucas. Localised discussions can hide any inconsistency in the management's pronouncements. A national institution such as the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions may be a more appropriate forum. But the blunt fact is that if any of the people responsible at DoI are genuinely enthusiastic at the thought of working-class initiatives, they would offer the combine more encouragement than the door and a friendly pat on the way out.

The growth of combines (Joint Representative Committees in Bullock) are central to industrial democracy's infrastructure. The preservation of engineering jobs is central to the industrial strategy, the development of long-term company level planning is vital to the expansion of British industry, and to the control of government subsidies to industry; while conversion programmes, such as this corporate plan, are a precondition if we are to by-pass the false choice of continued high defence expenditure or the dole queue. The unsponsored initiative of the workers at Lucas should be treated as a gift from heaven. Instead the combine feel that the DoI must be run either by cynics or fools. In December 1976, the combine wrote to the DoI: 'We hope you will accept that this is said not in a carping fashion, we have had a lot of encouragement from members of the Government, but no help.' Four months later, and three months from the next round of sackings, perhaps it's time to carp.

In 1976 the foreign migrant workforce in Western Europe amounted to 7.5 million, plus 5.5 million dependants.

What are the facts about migrants who want to go home? Ups and downs of Western economic growth suggest that many will want to return to their own countries. Is inducement a good idea? Should migrants invest in their own futures? What happens at the other end? One of the difficulties is the bi-lingual semi-literate child, torn between two cultures. But there are other push-pull factors.

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John Griffith

The Shore Way

In the old days when there were wolves in Wales and we chased, with the jawbones of deacons, the English and the bears, as the poet said, local government finance was based on the simple principle that the Government gave grants of various shapes and sizes and that each local authority decided what quality of service above the standard minimum it would provide and levied the local rate accordingly.

Then, later, the Government lumped together most of these grants and paid to local authorities a percentage of their estimated gross expenditure. Neither of these systems put a cash limit on the expenditure of individual or all local authorities who continued to determine the level of the rates.

My recollection is that Mr Heath's Government was the first to state publicly its intention to prevent local authorities from spending too much. For a variety of reasons, including the calamitous reorganisation introduced by that Government, the rate increase for 1974/75 suddenly jumped by 30 per cent overall, and in some areas exceeded 100 per cent. The Layfield Committee on local finance, which reported in May 1976 (NS 28 May 1976) said that the Department of the Environment could give no clear explanation of this increase.

Stern warnings began to be issued by ministers, grants were proportionately reduced, and many pressures were exerted on local authorities to spend less. And so, in real terms, they did, and the cuts in services followed and will follow. The Layfield Committee posed the alternatives as being between 'either adopting a financial system which frankly recognises a need for strong central direction, or taking positive steps to increase the ability of local authorities to manage local affairs'. It plumped for the latter and proposed the introduction of local income tax as a supplement to rating. Now the Government has issued its Green Paper with 'initial conclusions' which look whiter than white. It rejects local income tax and makes two principal proposals.

The first is that the existing grant system shall be replaced by a Unitary Grant - as (surprise) the Department of the Environment had recommended to the Layfield Committee who commented prophetically that it 'would have an obvious place in a system based on central responsibility where the Government would be responsible for deciding the main elements of local spending needs'. The proposed system of unitary grants would give each local authority an amount to bridge the gap between (a) the total amount it needed to spend (centrally assessed) to provide a level of services comparable with other similar authorities and (b) the amount it could raise in rates if it fixed its rate poundage at a (centrally) specified level. So the Government would determine for each authority what was its spending need and would specify the rate level.

The grant would then meet the difference.

If that were all, the whole trick would be complete and government control over local taxation and local spending would be complete. But some lip service is still paid to local autonomy. Rather grandly, the Government rejects both the 'centralist' and the 'localist' approaches described by the Layfield Committee and then, quite unbelievably, reverts to the hardest-baked chestnut, the undefeated conker, of all local government time:

Rather the Government see the duties and responsibilities involved in the provision of local public services as being shared on a partnership basis between central and local government.

The Government is not saying that a local authority can spend no more than its assessed spending need. But any surplus will attract grant 'at a reduced rate' which presumably could mean at a nil rate:

An authority choosing to spend more would *probably* get *some* extra grant but its spending would be financed increasingly by its ratepayers and less by the Government [my italics].

The present system does entail some control over total local authority expenditure, but in a way which the Green Paper calls 'non-selective, across-the-board'. The Government clearly wants a control that is much more specific; and policy guidance, even if

in general terms, either involves the Government in expressing views about detailed priorities, or is too vague. But the Government then comes up with one of those propositions which seem to say something by way of resolution but which in fact merely restate the dilemma:

The Government believe that more effective influence should be obtained over total local expenditure by revised financial arrangements which are clear in purpose, selective and fair in application, and which impose their own discipline with a minimum of obtrusive guidance and exhortation from the Government.

The very considerable new control which the Government propose is summarised in one sentence in the Green Paper:

A necessary feature of a unitary grant system would be the publication of the assessments of relative spending need *for each authority* [my italics].

That implies close central scrutiny. Moreover, says the Green Paper:

A unitary grant system would enable similar rate poundages to be levied for similar levels of service *without necessitating such a large grant as under the present system* [my italics].

Also to be published would be the standard rate poundage at which, in the Government's view, a local authority could finance its spending need over a basis comparable with other similar authorities. At this point those heady-cloudy financial men in the Department of Environment thought they saw something to please their politically-minded colleagues who had so far been able only to write the bit about partnership:

Provided the assessment of an authority's spending is accurate, ratepayers would be in a position to ask, if the rate poundage were above this standard, whether their local authority was less efficient or was providing services to a higher standard than other similar authorities.

As a matter of fact, Carruthers, I am very glad you asked that question. As it happens, when we spend more than other authorities it is because we are providing better services; and when we spend less, it is because we are being more economical. You may quote me as saying that our general aim is to provide services twice as good at half the cost.

The second principal proposal is that the basis of domestic rating should be the capital not the rental value of property. The exercise involved in determining the capital value will be either rough and arbitrary or hugely expensive. And the consequent appeals procedure will be costly to those who can afford it and not available to the great majority who cannot.

It is difficult to justify the change for, so long as a rating system is retained, what matters is not the absolute validity of rateable values but their relative validity within each county area. Moreover it is not proposed that industrial property should be revalued in the same way, and no one is making any published guess about the effect which the new proposal will have on the present relationship between the income to be derived from these two types of property.

Only one thing seems reasonably certain. Thatcher has said she will abolish the rating system. Watch this space. She won't. No one will. Not ever.



London Diary

□ Paradoxically the welfare state has diminished our concern with poverty. It would be impossible to write *The Road to Wigan Pier* or the more savage passages in *Bleak House* or *Oliver Twist* today. The poor, it is assumed, are merely those too stupid or too lazy to apply for supplementary benefit. So there were no thundering editorials about the young couple who – unable to afford a mortgage, get a council flat or pay their heating bills – checked into an airport hotel and set about killing themselves. The young man succeeded, the girl survived; and then we really did lash out with the taxpayers' money on a slap-up Old Bailey trial for her, on a charge of aiding and abetting his suicide, attempted suicide being no longer regarded as a crime. It's true that, if it makes you feel any better, the girl was put on probation: but I would have relished a chapter of a modern *Bleak House* on a welfare state that only wakes up when its lack of welfare has driven you to trying to take your own life. It seems sad that there's no one sufficiently naïve or humane left to write like Dickens any more. The subjects of contemporary novels, incest in Hampstead or facing bravely up to the menopause in Fulham, give little scope for savage passages of social indignation.

□ An admirably balanced piece in the *Observer* by Paul Ferris clearly makes him an expert on the present state of sex in society, a position which I am eager to renounce. The telephone rang, while I was leading my usual swinging existence, planting out lettuces or reading aloud from the works of Frances Hodgson Burnett. It was a middle-aged, middle-class woman's voice, phoning from a call box, perhaps a lady who had been to a matinee and tea at Fortnum's, about to catch the train at Charing Cross. 'Is this a bad moment?' she said, 'Are you having food?' Without pausing for an answer she rattled on, 'Well, you're an expert on "The Permissive", aren't you? I mean, what do you think? Now the children are all grown up, and my husband's getting on, naturally, do you think I should go in for The Permissive? What would your advice be on that?' I hastened to tell her that I could give her no assistance, that it was her life, but no doubt she would think carefully before taking any major step. 'Oh,' she sounded disappointed, 'I thought you could tell me all about "The Permissive". You must be having food.' She rang off. Next time she calls I'll give her the number of the *Observer*, or stay out with the lettuces.

□ Last week saw an extraordinarily widespread defence of the doctrine of judicial infallibility as a reaction to Michael Foot's remarks, no doubt historically correct, about the judges' hostility to the trades union movement. Lord Hailsham felt that the constitution would crumble if politicians criticised the judiciary; although judges have recently shown no such inhibitions when political decisions came up for review in the courts. By the end of the week some lawyers were remembering what Lord Justice

Scrutton said to judges in 1923: 'The habits you are trained in, the people you mix with, lead to your having a certain class of ideas of such a nature that, when you have to deal with other ideas, you do not give as sound and accurate a judgment as you would wish. This is one of the great difficulties at present with Labour.' It's not only in trades union cases that judges, and juries, bring their long ingrained habits of thought, their cherished beliefs and even their childhood fears with them when they come to court; and when the public see a case of sleeping with a girl under age, for instance, met with a conditional discharge in one court and a year's imprisonment in another they must realise that it isn't simply the crime, but the personality and the upbringing of the judge which must be different.

□ There is nothing more potentially agonising or embarrassing in the theatre than auditions: if you are a bank manager, a civil servant, or even a critic you can't imagine having to start your career again with every assignment, and to be chosen not only for your talent but other matters over which you have no control, like the shape of your nose or the length of your legs. The auditions I was watching this week passed without embarrassment, the only applicants were all young, talented and, given the circumstances, extremely courteous. But I remember past horrors, a girl who chose to do Saint Joan's speech about freedom in full armour, a sad boy who, when asked what he wanted to do, said, 'Go home' and fled from the theatre and the distant day when we confidently rejected two unknowns called Sarah Miles and Julie Christie. I know at one impresario's auditions the singers would open their sheet music and their mouths and be peremptorily thanked after the first note. It is, of course, a way in, which we ought to treat politicians applying for jobs. 'You know, quite frankly, we in the British Labour Party . . . ' 'Thank you very much. Don't call us, we'll call you.'

□ To Laurence Olivier, celebrating his 70th birthday, the horrors of auditions must be a remote memory. We are incredibly lucky to have lived in an age of the great rival performers: Gielgud, sensitive, comic, moving, and personally the wittiest of men; and Olivier, who gives every word of a part the rasp of danger, but who without his stage make-up, his false nose, or his walk, could be taken for a successful businessman on the train to Brighton. All his friends know the unbelievable effort of will with which he triumphed over his illness. I remember happy lunch-hours in the old pre-fab which used to house our National Theatre, working on the translation of *A Flea in Her Ear* with Sir Laurence and sharing his accustomed lunch of an apple and a glass of champagne. When this play toured North America he chose the smallest part and played the butler. Try as he would, he couldn't conceal his genius, and the audience spent a good deal of the evening wondering what the hell the butler was going to get up to next.

□ 'The reason why you boys are so round shouldered and stooping is that you have adopted the pernicious habit of wearing

braces! Cast away your braces and send home for belts.' So thundered the headmaster of my prep school, a white-haired eccentric who looked like the prophet Isaiah. So we would turn up for assembly next week duly belted and he would thunder: 'The reason why you boys are so short of breath and blue around the gills is because of the constriction of your stomachs due to the dangerous wearing of elasticated, S-buckled belts. Cast away your belts and send home for braces.' This headmaster, who played the same variations on boots and shoes, and even made us wear china locketts filled with iodine as a specific against 'flu, seems to have profoundly influenced the modern medical profession. This week, according to the *Lancet*, butter is fatal and those who eat margarine may live two years longer. This was excellent news for the margarine trade, who apparently financed a pamphlet on the subject; but now a doctor has appeared to tell us of the equally harmful effects of vegetable fats. Two things are to be borne in mind. First, doctors are the people who told Victorian children that masturbation would cause their brains to leak away, and who tried to save Byron's life by applying huge quantities of leeches to his forehead. Second, there's really no pleasure in the world which is worth giving up for the sake of an extra couple of years in the geriatric ward at Weston-super-Mare.

□ Of the many subjects of current concern to politicians which fail to engage my eager interest, devolution comes out top of the list. In fact I had no real feelings at all about devolution, except that it looks like a prodigious waste of money, until I was talking this week to David Hockney, who produced a telling argument in its favour. 'It's a great idea,' said Mr Hockney, who had just returned from Los Angeles to the cold climate of Merlyn Rees's England. 'Send all the puritans back to Wales and Scotland and we can have Merrie England once again.'

John Mortimer

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

□ David Wilkins, 19, unemployed, of Bromfords Drive, Wickford, Essex, was remanded on £950 bail by Marlborough Street magistrates, London, yesterday, accused of obtaining £30 by deception. He was said to have placed newspaper advertisements offering 'Cup Final seats for sale.' People who responded were sent small wooden stools with 'Cup Final' written on them. – *Sunday Times* (Michael Glasten)

□ Water authority bills for 3p and 4p have been delivered to customers in the Midlands. They have been told that they can pay them in two instalments. – *Daily Telegraph* (Brenda Rowe)

□ Sir, The people of Bermuda are to be congratulated on the appointment of such an able and fair-minded administrator as their new Governor. I should know, I was once Sir Peter Ramsbotham's fag at Eton. – Letter in *The Times* (Felix Pickering)

University Forum

Colin Dodd

An Infantile Disorder

On 12 May the unmistakable face of Dave Spart glared out at bourgeois Britain from the front page of its national papers. In tune with the Seventies, his hair and beard were neater and he'd taken to wearing glasses, but through the shaded lenses the familiar eyes of Neasden's one-track zealot were visible. Andy Strouthous (for this in fact was the mysterious figure), member of the NUS executive and President of North East London Polytechnic Students Union was also wearing a battered bow-tie specially for the occasion. The new Red Andy was on his way to a week in Pentonville as the first student leader in this country to be jailed for carrying out his union's instructions.

To the press, the confrontations at NELP provided an excuse for another bout of poly-bashing. The *Evening Standard* saved our elitist standards best of all by blaming 'all those responsible for developing courses beyond the capabilities of their students throughout the academic boom period of the Sixties'. The guilty 'had invited anyone to the wedding feast who can spell his name' (which made it a pity that the *Standard* reporter could not spell 'Strouthous') '... students are floundering around in a pool of half-grasped formulae in subjects which they cannot understand... what is most obvious and painful about the student protests is their absence of reality'. Something of a tautology in that one of the main arbiters of reality, by virtue of what they ignore, are newspapers. In this story they ignored rather a lot.

Standing on three main different sites NELP was one of the largest of the 30 polytechnics opened in 1970. Intended as a progressive centre of practical education geared to industry and the local commu-

nity, the director, George Brosan, was determined to avoid 'academic drift'. The priority of serving the needs of the community was not to be supplanted by the autonomous academic tradition of universities. 'It is not our fault that the universities have abdicated their social role and regressed into providing an education for an elite.' As president of the Institute of Production Engineers and a member of the Tory working party on education Brosan has a clear idea of the Poly's social role. 'For very many years profit has been a dirty word. In many branches of academia, especially those which include engineering, the effect of schooling has been to educate initiative out.'

Especially among arts students, Brosan was disliked for this kind of technocratic authoritarianism; so much so that when cuts began to be implemented at NELP there was no reserve of goodwill on which he could draw. The number of outside lecturers and the resources of the library diminished unlike canteen prices which rose sharply. Minimal provision for student housing was made. The education degree course was closed. 'Management-student relations' have spiralled downwards until now a working party has been set up to look into where things went wrong. Pickets had already been held over discriminatory fees against overseas students. In the spring of 1976 over 100 colleges and universities occupied over the issue of teacher unemployment. At NELP the campaign was linked to the racism which had led to the murder of two overseas students in East London; both were seen as the products of the economic crisis. During the occupation students found a minute of a directorate meeting of that year: 'It was also con-

sidered that an increasing proportion of overseas students would have serious implications for the attractiveness of the institution to English students and staff.' Coupled with another document it led to the suspicion of racism within the college. Brosan's response was that 'these are obviously stolen documents'.

In June three governors of NELP, three directorate appointees and three students were constituted as a working party to investigate the constitution of NELPSU with the intention of writing in 'safeguards'. It was never clear how legal this body was or what safeguards they had in mind. The talk was of making union membership voluntary, introducing postal votes for elections and supporting legal action brought by students harmed by disruption. More than one councillor threatened to reduce the capitation fee from £22 to £1. The plans were never in fact spelt out because 20 students occupied the room where the reformists were meeting. After an hour and a half, the governors agreed not to reconvene the meeting elsewhere and were allowed to leave.

The directorate's next gambit was to charge Strouthous and two others with inciting others to physically threaten persons upon the polytechnic. After the internal disciplinary hearings one of the accused was found not to have been in the room, another was reprimanded, but Strouthous was expelled. By a vote of 525-97 the student union called on Strouthous to stay on as president until the end of his term in June. Between his expulsion in December and his appeal in March negotiations went on to reinstate Strouthous, in the most hopeful of which Brosan apparently suggested a compromise via the Dean of Student Services. If Strouthous signed an agreement forgetting the governors' attempt to change the constitution then Brosan would see Strouthous through the appeal. He signed. But Brosan instead of speaking for him did quite the opposite.

The next step was Strouthous's appearance in the High Court for contempt of an injunction banning him from the Poly. Now NELPSU have not won many victories in their seven year history. But when the NUS unprecedentedly stepped in as conciliators and persuaded Brosan to give Strouthous access again to the student union offices, a serious point about the union's independence had been won. Strouthous then nearly blew it. He refused to leave jail on the tortuous grounds that he could not go to the student union bar and socialise with the students. The occupiers also stayed put until a mass meeting of the union told them all to come out.

The Far Left who ran many of the occupations believe in confrontation as a way of life. Praxis makes perfect as they say. By some crude process of demystification it reveals to the unenlightened the state power behind educational authorities. To them if you escalate your demands, you escalate your recruitment. There are certain rituals in university politics. A good student campaign resembles striptease: occupations should be worked up to. The ultimate act of divestment must be used sparingly; if it occurs too quickly or regularly the audience's response will be that of flaccid *déjà-vu* and finally contempt.

STUDENTS

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

Up Girls and At Them

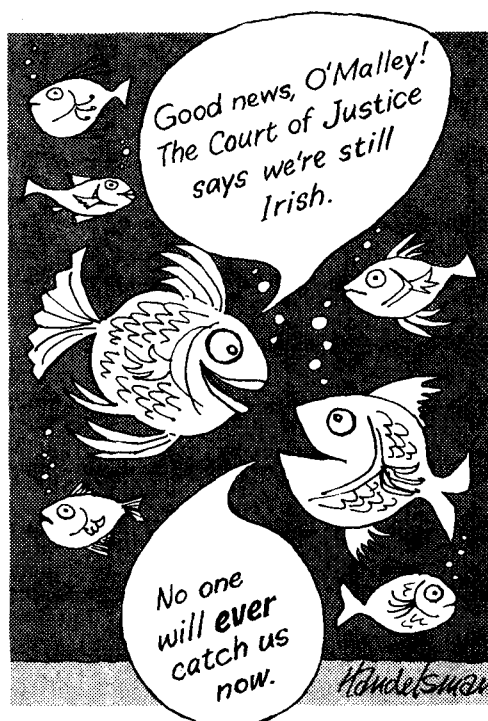
I really cannot imagine why so many people positively go out of their way in order to be beastly about Mrs Thatcher. Her vocal organ did fall at one time, I must admit, not too happily on the ear and its careful articulations, which appeared to be hiding something else, gave it the ring of a conscientious elocution student struggling for that cherished pewter medal at a minor drama school. However, as all can hear, she has taken trouble to improve both it and the volume and trajectory of its decibels and, on her return from China, was found to be now booming away and banging on just like the rest of us. She is pretty and fresh-looking and highly intelligent and she can, when attempts are made to savage her, answer impertinent questions extremely crisply, a thing that many male politicians are far too feeble to do (the dreadfully ingratiating grins with which they seek to protect themselves are no match for vinegar).

And if only feebleness were their sole drawback but unfortunately such men are dangerous too, egocentric and vain by nature, mainly out for themselves and ready to risk the country's welfare and send us whizzing even faster down the drain merely for the sake of their own idiotic principles and maintaining what they think of as their 'prestige'. And maintaining, too, the salary that goes with it. And by male politicians, I mean of course those of all persuasions. Women are by nature mostly non-egocentric and have a far clearer idea of life's essentials. It is now perfectly plain to me that this country's only hope of political and economic salvation lies in a national government led (they can take it in turns) by Mrs Thatcher and Mrs Shirley Williams.

You scoff, of course. You reach for your pens and the Basildon in order to write me or our editor a caustic letter. All I can say is that those who do so can never have been privileged to have to do with good women in bulk and *en masse*. Not that Mrs T. and Mrs W. together constitute exactly a bulk or *masse* but they are both fine representatives of our country's superb female backbone, without which it would totally collapse. You scoff again, I dare say, and ask yourselves how a bachelor like me comes by this wide knowledge of our feminine potential. Well, it comes from many years of lecturing to women's institutes, talking to mothers' unions, chatting at women's luncheon clubs, speaking to ladies' literary groups, and appearing on the BBC's *Woman's Hour*. If you are in any doubt about the practical good sense of women, switch on your radios at 1.45 p.m. Throughout its life, the programme's variety alone has been remarkable, splendidly presented in very easily digested 7-minutes'-worth talks. In recent weeks, we were

offered attractive *hors d'oeuvres* in the shape of a pick of paperbacks, a missionary fresh from Pakistan, the tripe stalls of Blackburn, geranium growing, a visit to Bangkok, round the world in a minibus, keeping pigs in Kentish Town, inside the Paris embassy, the plight of the otter, restoring valuable paintings, a visit to Brookwood Cemetery, relax with yoga, life in Lambeth (not the Palace), Hemingway's widow, and even 'the Irish and their idiosyncrasies'.

Then, with appetites whetted, come the programme's main features. There are no trivialities, just a wide spread of important matters – suitable holiday places for handicapped children, a day in a primary school, basic cooking techniques, how to survive painful bereavement, schoolgirl mothers in Bristol, advice for the parents of deaf children, teachers in training, the effect of twins on a family, a headmistress on education, and sympathetic words addressed to parents of stillborn children and advice on how best to cope. And all this merely a short selection from four or five weeks of a service that carries on, year in, year out. For a long time, the delightfully soothing voice of Marjorie Anderson, an unseen personality rightly loved by all, accompanied and introduced all this, and now it is the equally tuneful and agreeable Sue MacGregor. The contributors' luncheon before the broadcast (cold cuts, light ale, tinned pilchards in season, cheese and charm), at which the women producers too are present, is alive with a rarish thing in our society – straight goodness and a wish to spread nothing but comfort and light.



If you are at odds about my message concerning the ethical superiority of women, ask yourselves why there is no evening BBC programme called *Man's Hour*, and then picture to yourself of what, if it came into being, it might consist – talks on beer down the ages (and down the gullet), keeping your head steady while putting, gifts for secretaries that look expensive but aren't, questionable jokes, toys for the kiddies fashioned from used pipe cleaners, and how to avoid club bores while remaining a club bore yourself. Men are in general sadly limited and the life's trials and chores with which they have to deal are relatively few in number. This is not the place for mentioning too their outstandingly childish behaviour and so I won't.

This aura of goodness is to be found at full force in the other female gatherings which I have mentioned. After a due exchange of polite letters and telephone calls, one arrives at 'the hall' or 'the hut' to find Madam President all beams and smiles and warm welcomes. Committee members are introduced ('Where we'd be without our faithful Miss Pickthorn I just do *not* know'). The sun pours in, the temperature rises, assorted bottles of sherry are daringly produced and 'Pickles' does the honours ('Now let's see, you were the medium dry, weren't you?'). And in due course I rise and find myself gazing out over a flower-garden of hats. Often I speak, by request, about the BBC itself – the old days of Reith, the banned subjects, the total absence of any extempore talk, the anxieties of having your own comedy programme, the letters that listeners send in, and so on. They like to hear of harmless mishaps: for example the day when, on some royal occasion, a flurried announcer said excitedly 'And here comes Princess Margaret wearing a becoming off-the-hat face'. I mention also the time at Christmas when, instead of the words 'empty stockings hung up' I managed to spooner the phrase into 'empty hockings stung up', which sounds like rather disagreeable hunks of meat being attacked by bees. I end on what is a completely genuine note, a panegyric in praise of women for their resilience, conscientiousness, unselfishness, good sense, general wholesomeness and never-failing ability to get on with the job and keep the world turning. Applause, thanks, any questions, and out into the air.

If you are still in any doubt, purchase any local district newspaper (the *Grantchester Argus*, or some such) and read what heartening activities have been going on in the villages. Cake competitions, talks on 'Can we trust computers?' and 'How to get new life out of an old mackintosh', hints on basketwork, training classes for Sunday school teachers, charitable tombolas, prayer groups, whist, coffee mornings, and sponsored two-hour knit-ins, the winner usually completing a full yard of knitting. And there is a further point. Mrs Thatcher and Mrs Williams have a priceless advantage. They would last longer. The figures of the most recent mortality rates show that women can expect 6.4 more years of life than men, though whether this is due, as many men would claim, to a rather more cushioned existence or stronger guts, I really would not know.

Letters to the Editor

About His Excellency

Sir, I hope James Fenton (NS 20 May) no longer feels frustrated, having devoured the leftovers. But did he really have to rake in the dustbin to satisfy his desires? Perhaps he searched the dustbins of Downing Street for champagne 13 years ago.

Mr Fenton is entitled to his view that Mr Jay is a bore – but what Mr Jay certainly does not do either on television or when writing in *The Times* is to trivialise serious issues. He does not throw in smutty titbits to titillate his readers or viewers in order to satisfy those who are hypocrites, who enjoy muck-raking journalism.

Not a word is said about Mr Jay's ability or qualities. Obviously Mr Jay should never have married Margaret Callaghan, or become a friend of Dr Owen.

It is very sad that Mr Fenton should knock both Mr Jay and Dr Owen in the way he does. Both are men of outstanding ability and talent, and the Labour Party should be proud to have such talent in its ranks, especially when one sees the people on the Opposition front bench. It would be a sad day for the Labour Party if such men were not attracted to its ranks.

L. BURTON

60 St Keverne Square
Kenton Bar
Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Sir, Mr Fenton makes, at a time when one thought that everything had been said and written on the subject, the most cogent and apposite points and if one could apply to an article the term 'definitive', it should be applied to it. It's impossible to quarrel with it.

He has, however, missed out one point: what about the convoluted, obtuse style of the Ambassador-designate? Many of us had great difficulty in understanding without re-reading his articles, sometimes reading passages several times, and while I may be particularly dense in understanding the more ethereal heights of economics, he would be well advised, in his new post, to use language intelligible to the average audience in America. There are some writers and speakers whose language is as complicated as his, but most people there not only express themselves clearly and forcefully, but do not comprehend involved dissertations in articles or speeches, where clarity is essential. And unlike Mr Fenton, I did find his oral style on ITV clearer, so he *can* express himself, if he wants to, intelligibly for the non-specialist.

LASZLO GOMBOS

Garlick Club
London WC2

A Tartan Print for Scotland

Sir, Robin Cook (NS 13 May) implies discourtesy on my part. If there was any, I am sorry. But what of his part? He reports an informal private conversation 16 months ago and gets it wrong. While my memory is as fallible as his, I recall being surprised that the studio audience here voted against extending the proposed powers of the Scottish Assembly. Not long afterwards, however, Robin Cook's own Government decided that those powers ought to be extended into the economic field. My concern was simply with whether the Government's proposals were viable.

For BBC Scotland the justification for paying part of the costs of Professor Mackay's

symposium – in return for the broadcasting rights – was that it offered to open up informed discussion on a topic of immediate interest in Scotland. The study was non-partisan: the authors were academics of differing political hue. In the end the book and the five BBC Scotland programmes provided a valuable contribution to public debate, as may be seen from the substantive part of Robin Cook's review.

ALASTAIR HETHERINGTON
Controller

BBC Scotland
Broadcasting House
Glasgow

Hairshirt Socialism

Sir, Bernard Harrison's letter (NS 20 May) awoke in me a long dormant desire to express my feelings about the themes discussed in this and similar correspondence. I'm far from being a hairshirt addict, but I think we've all been too simple-minded about what constitutes material prosperity. The phrase 'time is money' might well repay closer scrutiny. We all want enough money to buy the best, that is the most suitable and durable and therefore cheapest in the long run, goods. For that we need time to make judgments and choices. Time to choose on the basis of sound judgment implies time for education. We also need time to enjoy what we have, but that time must have limits, even for the sake of full enjoyment, and that means time also spent working, making what we do not yet have, but want, from poetry to riding boots or white sliced Mother's Pride.

I can and do maintain my confidence and élan on what I'm sure is no more than a very high unskilled worker's wage, largely, I imagine, because my teaching job also pays out a bit extra in time. I wouldn't mind a bit more of that kind of payment, either, very much in preference to more cash. There are so many things I should like to do, not least keep my body in better trim.

Conservatives, of course, would have their answer to this. Within the framework of an ideal capitalist set-up, they would say, one can save up and divide one's time as one pleases, retire early and so on . . . But that wouldn't work, even on a fairly limited scale. Unorganised stop-go working is disruptive and very wasteful of human skill, talent and experience, the really precious things. I'm sure if it were made clear to ordinary people that they can be paid in legitimate time off, shorter working hours, very many would choose that in preference to more money, once their basic needs were securely met. Time is so easy to measure, too, no problems there.

Double whiskies and taxi-hailing are not only marks of the beast, they're marks of the poor beast on its way to a breakdown. To call the pursuit of money and luxury a virtuous motive, is going it a bit, surely. It is at best an immature one.

H. DIGGES

28 Coppetts Road
London N10

Clever Mr Mortimer

Sir, Mr John Mortimer's version of what I wrote recently in *The Times* about the Federation of Conservative Students is characteristic of the standards of intellectual honesty we expect from him.

He wrote (NS 13 May): 'Mr Ronald Butt . . . pointed out that the Conservative hierarchy would never allow this [the 'this' refers to Mr

Mortimer's own previous phrase to do away with our idiotic censorship legislation] as it would be like "building skyscrapers on Exmoor".'

What I actually wrote, in strict reference to a contention by the chairman of the Federation of Conservative Students that you should be able to do what you like with your personal property, which I considered to be nonsense, was as follows:

I do not think that the Church of England would be allowed, if it wanted, to pull down St Paul's for redevelopment or that Sir Keith would advocate allowing a landlord to build skyscrapers on Exmoor. Nor do I think that any Conservative government will dismantle all exchange controls; I do not, in short, think that it will usher in a do-as-you-like society or abolish society's concern for the welfare of the individual.

Mr Mortimer is clever and I hope this quotation will give your readers a useful opportunity for studying his techniques. Better still, they could read my whole article. This attempted to rebut the idea that either freedom of personal conduct, or freedom of property could ever be absolute and unfettered. Whether your readers agree or disagree with my point of view they will search in vain for any statement by me that 'doing away with our idiotic censorship laws' . . . would be 'like building skyscrapers on Exmoor'.

RONALD BUTT

The Times
London WC1

The Ulster Strike

Sir, It is ironic that the BBC, having been blamed by some commentators and politicians for guaranteeing the success of the Ulster Workers' Council Strike in 1974, are now being accused of toeing the Government's line to defeat the Action Council Strike of 1977.

In a tendentious paragraph in her article, 'Dr Paisley's Reverse', (NS 13 May), Mary Holland perpetrates the tired old fallacy that the BBC is some kind of leviathan which subtly conditions its reporters to become its apparatchiks. As one of the reporters accused of producing in early morning news bulletins 'models of reassurance, conveying to anxious breakfast time listeners that it was perfectly safe to go to work', I want to nail the suggestion that we were told (however subtly) to take a pro-government line.

First, from Day One of the strike, we had between five to seven reporters with radio telephones, watching the situation on the streets. They reported in detail, on blocked roads, bus burnings, factory gate picketing and occasional violence throughout the Belfast area. A model of reassurance? We did report that thousands of people managed to get to work, despite the Action Council's call for a total closure of factories, shops and offices on the first day, and we had eye-witness reports saying so. We did that because it was true. But, of course, no group of journalists can report in detail how such a strike call affects every member of the community or even every place of work.

In the early morning, we got on the phone to up to a dozen of the largest factories to get assessments on the level of picketing; then, from these factories, and later from employers organisations, union headquarters and shop stewards on site, we built up a picture of percentage turn-outs at factories, where the strike might have been expected to have maximum effect. Later in the day, we got reports from local stringers on shop opening in provincial towns. To anyone listening, it was surely clear that the strike bit hard in some areas, and less so in others.

The only conditioning we had was our experience. Our touchstone of comparison was

the 1974 strike which was overwhelmingly successful. There was an almost complete stoppage after the first few days, partly because the power workers supported it. This time, near-normality was news and I submit we were right to report it, where we saw it. Ms Holland, of course, has every right to conclude that we got it wrong, if that is what she believes. I don't think we did, in general; I believe we conveyed the right impression at the time.

BRIAN WALKER

BBC

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Democracy in Israel

Sir, I read the Palestine Day advert. (NS 13 May) with great interest - 'for a Democratic Secular Palestine'. This is a constant cry of Arabs and the Arab lobby. Where is there one Arab state at present in being that is remotely democratic or secular? Saudi Arabia? Libya? Iraq? These are *democratic*?

Why don't they set an example and produce an Arab state that to some degree is democratic and whose prisons are not full of political victims - usually Communists despite the support of Russia. The fact is that, with all its faults such as the influence of reactionary Rabbis, Israel is outstandingly the only state in the Middle East that can be called democratic - and judging from the behaviour of the Arab leaders is likely to remain the only one for a very long time.

HAROLD SMITH

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John Bull's Other Islands

Sir, The article by Martin Short (NS 6 May) on the Channel Islands mentions my work with this group at Westminster. I feel that my reasons for concern might be made clearer by looking at some of Guernsey's legal peculiarities. It must be realised that the system of law operating in this Island is unique. The Bailiwick of Guernsey actually includes the smaller Islands of Alderney and Sark and even though the total population of the Bailiwick is less than 60,000 there are differences in the laws on each island.

The law itself is based on the ancient common (customary) law of Normandy - but even though France now has the Code Napoléon, Guernsey lawyers may still be required to study at Caen in France (a foreign country).

Most of the common law is unwritten and if that isn't bad enough, where pen has been put to parchment, then French was traditional. Hence although new legislation is generally drafted now in English, many documents and procedures are in French and this same foreign language features absurdly often in all legal transactions and terminology. There are all sorts of problems trying to translate the French original into English of the modern world.

In preserving their obvious stranglehold over the population, Guernsey lawyers publish no explanatory leaflets on citizens' rights under the law and there is virtually no legal aid system. Since the island is a 'tourist centre', a few warnings about the criminal laws might be useful. It's certainly not the place for a 'dirty weekend' - so ignore any tempting offers from travel agents and/or your secretary - because sexual intercourse is unlawful here except between a husband and (his!) wife. Don't be put off though - there are many other activities to join in but be warned if you hear noises outside your hotel at night, don't get involved: witchcraft is still an offence and you may get five years hard labour. Better not to complain too strongly either to the manager - 'it is expressly forbidden to swear against or blaspheme the name of God'.

Alas, accidents will happen - so if you do kill somebody, find 12 men of the neighbourhood quietly so that they can agree to be a chance-medley. You will then be asked to touch the corpse and (assuming you haven't collapsed from shock) will be acquitted. Anyone determined to be a nuisance might try a spot of brigandage for a change - but you will almost certainly be deported as banishment remains a punishment, not only for visitors, but for all people in the Bailiwick.

Finally, it may be worth pointing out that the Kilbrandon Report on the Constitution determined that the Channel Islands (and the Isle of Man) are all part of the British Isles and that the British Isles are an entity in the eyes of the world. They concluded, therefore, that it was essential that institutions and practices within the islands should not differ substantially from those within the UK. The Home Secretary has 'special responsibilities' for island matters and I would suggest that anyone requiring further information might like to contact him - soon?

MICHAEL DUN

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Is Birth Erotic?

Sir, As the mother of three, and having been present at the birth of my daughter's first child, I read your reviewer's approving comments (NS 29 April) on George Groddeck's statement in *The Meaning of Illness*: 'The passage of the child's head through the vagina is more pleasurable than any other erotic sensation.'

Let any man try and see if the last moment of childbirth means anything but relief from pain. Is this erotic?

Your reviewer adds that anyone who has looked into the face of a newborn child can see who is the sufferer. I have, and must differ. In any case the experience, painful or not, is once and for all for him or her, whereas the mothers/breeders must undergo the ordeal for each child throughout their fruitful life.

ANNE WIGNALL

Aliverion, Euboias
Greece

Killing 'Today'

Sir, I agree wholeheartedly with what John Mortimer had to say (London Diary, 13 May) about the new, disjointed format of BBC Radio's 'Today' programme. It is a pitiable shadow of its former self. Changing it is a crime equal to the abolition of the Sunday postal collection. Both acts are destined to destroy the goose, golden eggs and all. If that irrational planner at the BBC really wants to kill it off, why mess around with halfway measures? Just recruit Tony Blackburn and Hughie Green as presenters and have done.

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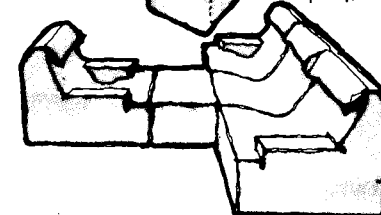
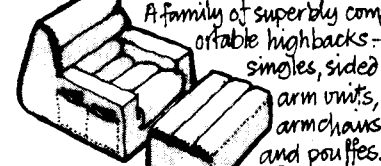
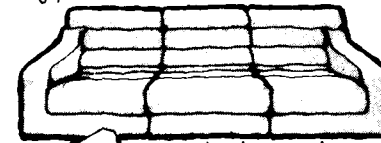
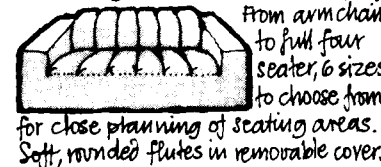
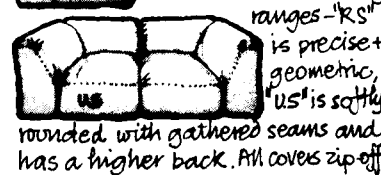
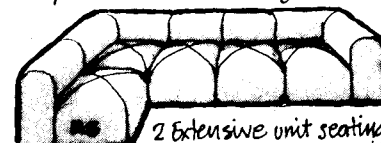
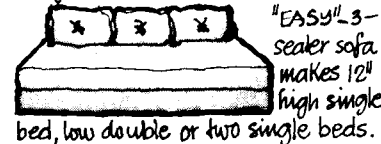
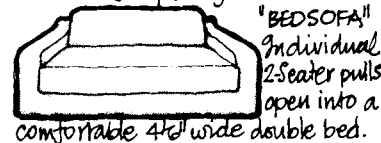
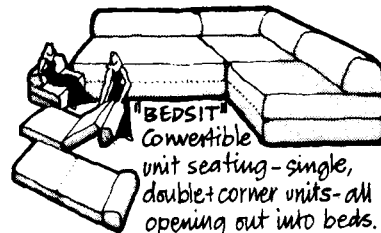
International Language

Sir, F. J. Daniels (Letters, NS 20 May) reminded us that the principal aim of basic English was to provide a second, or international language for everyone. This dream of C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards was surely a praiseworthy one, yet they overlooked the fact that English, whether in its usual or its 'basic' variety, is still a national language and is tied up with Anglo-American culture. The only language which has ever had a hope of becoming truly international (and just for an elite) is Esperanto.

H. S. CHAPMAN

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

Noël Annan

Forgive, Forgive

I Say! by ARTHUR MARSHALL *Hamish Hamilton* £4.95

Arthur Marshall is in a bad way. Arrested for loitering in the first half of the NS without visible social intent, he has pleaded that he was only selling humour – a pretty dubious Charing Cross Road sort of occupation, some might think, especially when his type of humour hardly stands the test of intellectual scrutiny. Does his type of fun satisfy Kant, who defined laughter as 'an affection arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing'? Has he studied Bergson on laughter or obeyed Herbert Spencer's injunction that a humorist should aim at 'descending incongruity'? Where is one to find in him Jean Paul Richter's requirements of *Hohngelaechter* or *Galgenhumor*? You may argue that derision or mordancy are not the essence of English humour, which Taine thought was the combination of gravity and mockery. But where in Marshall do we find gravity, and what are we to make of the fact that of the 19 characteristics of English humour, categorised by Harold Nicolson, he scores a mingy six?

Worse is to follow. It is as disastrous for him if you admit being amused. For what is his defence?

I learned laughter at my mother's knee and with some difficulty for it shook continually . . . It wasn't formal 'jokes' that amused us but the way people behaved, the things they said.

(You note the noun 'mother'? Freud, whose lucubrations on humour are lengthy, would have noted *that*.) As a child, he and his mother became convulsed when in a Torquay restaurant two ladies, whose bosoms hung heavy above the luncheon table, moaned indignantly because they could not get served: 'Waitress, *Waitress!* We're the two stuffed marrows.' Most unwisely the accused has admitted:

I have to tell you something. I cannot help being happy. I have struggled against it, but no good . . . There is, I am well aware, no virtue in this. It results from a combination of heredity, health, good fortune and shallow intellect . . . I love life. Forgive me.

You may be inclined to do so, but Goethe will not. He once said to Mueller that one cannot have a sense of humour unless one is without conscience or responsibility. Humour is a self-protective device, a private indulgence, a bland blancmange, not like those spicy aperients, wit, satire and irony, which chastise human failings. Disgustingly enough, it makes people feel comfortable and disarms the harshness of reality by making it appear fantastic. Disastrously

enough, it panders to our intellectual laziness and makes us glow with that most odious of emotions – optimism. Surely the verdict is inescapable. Already I see the prisoner, Marshall, being pinioned by Pierrepont, and on his way to the fatal trap before being launched into eternity.

But stay . . . Is there no Portia to help the poor struggler? There is. Portia appears in the guise of the Spirit of the Second Half of the NS. The salvation of the Nagger has been the Stagger – that second half of the paper which reels around somewhat tipsily, speaking with conflicting voices, a counterweight to the first half. That single-minded socialism of the first half, backbiting, querulous, with its pursed mouth and vindictive eyes, is confronted by a liberalism for the most part genial (though it too can snap) which owes nothing to political conviction. But it has moral conviction. You have only to weigh the intellectual integrity of Raymond Mortimer or V. S. Pritchett against that of Kingsley Martin to sense it.

A year and a half ago the present editor, with real flair, decided to plump into the scales the sturdy figure of Arthur Marshall, and Portia points out that here is someone who detects cruelty beneath however many disguises it attempts to hide, grasps any kind of love with gratitude, dislikes self-pity, thinks Billy Butlin's knighthood made more sense than most honours because he discovered how to make masses of people happy, has 'come to loathe and be suspicious of all officialdom', which seems to him to get nastier and more hateful every year, does not sympathise with the view that homosexuals are ill but neither does he think that it is simply enough to be one to be okay, celebrates talent when he sees it whatever its faults (Noël Coward) and leaves no one in the dark when he thinks it isn't there ('Godfrey Winn's talent could sit like that daily pinch of Epsom salts comfortably on a sixpence'). He has a keen eye for the insensitivities of the rich ('Hard up? Just sell *all* your Fabergé'), and is tender to those in misfortune whatever folly may have led them into it.

No one can expect me to write a *critical* review of Arthur Marshall's contributions to the NS during 1976. I have been listening to his voice for over 40 years, since the age of 19 when I asked him to appear in a charity matinée. He did so at the drop of a hat: offer him a stage and he's on it at once. He was then a master at Oundle, a school which invariably defeated my own at rugby. We were undone before the match ever began by the starkness of the changing rooms; but less robust though we were, it is monstrous of him to put it about that he heard my voice crying from the bottom of a ruck: 'For pity's sake, Humphrey, you're standing on my hair.' Those

were the days when every aspiring member of a university acting club imitated him. 'Jovers, girls,' said Elspeth McAbee, 'the Clerk of the Weather has turned up trumps and no mistake. Let's risk a pi-jaw from Mademoiselle and cut along and inspect the wicket . . .' He had the same mesmeric effect as Peter Cook and Jonathan Miller had in 1959. Here in his book are the topics, the jokes, the high spirits, the incongruities – the delight in exposing absurdity, jargon and unreality – which have been the delight of my life. I owe more hours of hilarity to him than to anyone I know.

Bizarre names set him off at once. 'This compartment is reserved for Jeremiah Worms, Margaret Thing and Mr Cake.' I rejoice to see that the detail of the Bible is at his command and that he relishes Jehu's gift to Jezreel's rulers. 'Seventy severed royal heads in an ornamental hamper, a real challenge to Fortnum's.' He is the recording angel of disaster on stage. My favourite story in the book is of the fairies in an amateur open-air performance of the *Dream* vanishing from a scene, their gossamer wings gently undulating, only to reappear in disarray flapping like bats: they had made their exit by mistake slap into the Gents. Having taught for years the mysteries of *faire* and *porter*, and those ridiculous plurals *hiboux*, *joujoux*, *poux*, *genoux*, his French is impeccable; but it appears that he is puzzled by Dutch. Only Arthur Marshall would have sensed a tiny personal irritation in what he claims to be the Dutch for 'Keep off the Grass', *Nit Brillen in de Bushen*.

I very much fear that down at 'Myrtlebank' in Devon he and his neighbours are stout Conservatives. It's no use expecting him to admire the methods of Neill or Dartington for the tots. He's no more indulgent to temperament on the stage than in children or pets: Coquelin is his hero; Stanislavsky and the Method he regards as pretentious rubbish. He is not an intellectual. Forgive him. He simply knows what it is to be decent, and to hold firm and reasonable views on what is right or wrong. If anyone says that those views are middle-class, he should be told that they are the just but generous instincts of stalwart people from every class in society. Precisely because he is a stickler for the proprieties he is the master of impropriety.

And yet he is invariably modest – well, using that word in the sense of being free from vanity, pride or envy of the success of others. He has no great opinion of his talents and has said that he learned exactly where he stood as a performer when, at the time he was making his name and was much in demand to perform at theatrical parties, Emile Littler congratulated him with the words: 'My dear boy, you could play Dame at Leeds tomorrow.' In fact, his timing, the secret of comedy, is flawless, and his professionalism on stage is outraged when he sees slipshod work. Now at the height of his fame, he hurries from television to radio studio, and is in imminent danger of show-biz canonisation in *This is Your Life*.

E. M. Forster saw Virginia Woolf's work as a row of little silver cups, gleaming trophies. I don't quite see Arthur Marshall's

weekly pieces like that – like a lot of pots for footer and ducker adorning the House Room mantelpiece. Let his detractors tremble: they are more like those kings in Macbeth stretching out to the crack of doom. I can assure readers from my conversations with him over the years that there are hundreds of thought-provoking incidents as yet unrecorded. As each week he lays brick upon brick, the building rises. In my view, there can be only one verdict. Case dismissed with costs (5p less than a fiver for you, and cheap at the price).

Edward Mendelson

Not So Dandy

Children of the Sun: A Narrative of 'Decadence' in England after 1918 by MARTIN GREEN Constable £7.50

There is an intermittent genre of books in which spiritual autobiography is disguised as intellectual history. Connolly's *Enemies of Promise* is the best of these. Norman Podhoretz's *Making It* was, until now, the worst.

Martin Green's new book purports 'to describe the imaginative life of English culture after 1918 and to trace the prominence within it, the partial dominance over it, established by one intellectual temperament'. He does this mostly by retelling Harold Acton's memoirs and Marie-Jacqueline Lancaster's *Brian Howard: Portrait of a Failure*. He adds some breathless social history and some potted biographies of writers and politicians who came to prominence in the Twenties and after, but his 'narrative nexus', as he calls it, is the lives of Acton and Howard, 'because between them they tried nearly all the major options of self-realisation which the period offered to men of that temperament'.

He is referring to the temperament of the Sunchild, a mythic youth devoted eternally to his own beauty. Mr Green gets this notion from the (outdated?) anthropology of Bachofen and Perry, and after he has used it to hold together a book of 500 pages, explains that he doesn't really care if it is correct or even coherent. His book is merely 'exploiting' the notion to 'give an added scope and dignity to the ideas'. These are qualities Mr Green's ideas certainly lack, but at least he seems to know it. Undaunted, he divides the Sunchild into the subgroups of the Dandy-Aesthete, the Rogue, and the Naïf – or sometimes simply Harlequin and Pierrot. Comprised in these groups are Stravinsky, Diaghilev, Cocteau, Proust, Kafka (whose photographs demonstrate his 'Pierrot-identity'), Nabokov, Eliot, Woolf, Housman, the Sitwells, Wodehouse, Betjeman, Waugh, Greene, Connolly, Isherwood, Auden, Spender, Churchill, Beaverbrook, Lindbergh, J. Robert Oppenheimer and many many others. If any member of this cast of thousands persists in showing some individuality beyond the Pierrot-identity or whatever, Mr Green is undis-

turbed: 'from any larger point of view these splits and subdivisions are of no importance.'

It is no insult to Harold Acton – who calls himself 'neither famous nor spectacular' – to suggest that a cultural history of England that sets him and Brian Howard at the centre is rather like a political history of England written from the perspective of the county of Rutland. But Mr Green is more intent on discrediting the Sunchildren than on writing their history, so Acton and Howard – two examples of unfulfilled early promise – serve his purposes exactly. As Mr Green's method is to analyse the 'cultural' notion of the Sunchild (even if he suspects it doesn't mean anything), but not to interpret individuals beyond the point where he drops them into one of his categories, he can argue that 'culturally' there is nothing to distinguish Brian Howard, who wrote a few reviews and one thin book of verse, from writers like Auden or Waugh. Accomplishment doesn't matter; categories do. And because Mr Green's writers and politicians, having worked all day, relaxed in the evening at *louché* parties where they met (or didn't meet – Mr Green isn't particular) unproductive dandies like Brian Howard, and because most of the guests also knew (or didn't know) Guy Burgess and Kim Philby, Mr Green can use his categories to show that *all* the Sunchildren were accomplices in one great conspiracy of betrayal. And when they weren't betraying England they were corrupting her, through books like *Put Out More Flags*: 'reading about the character

Basil Seal may be said to have prepared all England to admire Guy Burgess.' Mr Green argues that the dandy who never grows into maturity is at the centre of the modern Sunchild phenomenon and that 'typically' the dandy is homosexual. The nudging inverted commas in his subtitle are a sign that by 'decadence' he means homosexuality in high places. And this is his main theme.

At the opposite pole from the decadent is the 'decent man'. Mr Green is a 'decent man': we have it on his own authority. At Cambridge, where he 'listened only to Leavis', he 'chose the decent man, turned my back on the dandies'. *Decency* for Mr Green is the attribute of *maturity*, and therefore of *manliness*, *marriage*, and *fatherhood*. He is very much in favour of manliness. When he praises Leavis because 'he wrote as "the married man"' who fathered Q. D.'s children, when he celebrates the 'potency' and 'size' of New York, when he condemns post-war London as a 'world-centre of impotence' – when he does all this, he makes it plain that he himself is equal to the hard task of procreation.

Mr Green now lives in America, a very manly place. He compares at length the 'typically American' Manhattan Project, whose 'magnificent' creativity devised the atomic bomb, with the 'typically British' decadence of MI5 and MI6 which employed Howard and Burgess. The comparison seems a bit tendentious. MI6 could best be compared with the American OSS, a similar haven for the indiscreet and well-connected; while the Mahattan Project is more com-

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parable – taking into account differences in national resources – with British work in radar and computers. But these are quibbles. The main point remains that MI6 was a nest of dandies, while the atomic bomb was *decent*.

Mr Green flashes his decency on almost every page of this book, yet by the end of it he admits that he is no longer the anti-dandy he once was. He has 'risen above' the battle: 'The spirit of my work', he explains, 'is certainly transcendent, conciliatory, and reconciling.' Oddly enough, some of his subjects haven't seen it that way. After the book appeared last year in America, the threatening rumble of lawsuits could be heard beneath the quiet announcements of delay in its British publication. The copyright page describes the British edition as a 'revised, corrected version' of the American. A comparison of the two is instructive. Correcting the book was a matter of fixing a few dozen howlers – Mr Green tended to forget the exact titles of books – but enough errors remain to keep the reader on the alert. The revisions are another matter. In the quotations below, the American version appears first, followed in square brackets by the sanitised British text.

Mr Green, in his transcendent conciliatory way, makes much of the fact that people who had been friendly with Guy Burgess and Kim Philby spoke of them, after they fled to Russia, with understanding and without hatred. He writes:

The various remarks – by Auden, Waugh, and Greene – surely indicate a kind of complicity [UK: a kind of sympathy] in these writers with the traitors. This is not a complicity of action, of course, but of feeling [UK: *this sentence is omitted*]. The writers could not honestly condemn the traitors. For them, and for most English intellectuals, political treachery was not a category of evil [UK: of greatest evil] . . .

Perhaps this statement, and others like it, fairly represents Mr Green's spirit of *decency*.

But with such examples of betrayal before him, how can Mr Green now rise above the battle of dandies v. decents? Ever since the *decent* men, as he explains, triumphed over the dandies in 1957 (the date seems arbitrary, but Mr Green later points out that this was when his own articles began to be published) he has undergone a change of heart. He has discovered that, like Burgess and Maclean, even Martin Green is capable of disloyalty: 'there was something in me that was *actively* disloyal to decency' (the italics are his own). But he discovered this only after he learned that decency had not triumphed after all. Shortly after publishing his first book, where he praised Kingsley Amis as one who had helped to make England 'safe for decency', he revisited this country, only to find that, while he had been away, 'Amis did not remain a decent man [UK: had changed his position].' Here was a crisis indeed. Mr Green's celebration of the Angries, he found, had been outdated even before it was published, and now the sources of critical potency seemed to grow more remote by the hour. With Amis sounding more and more like Waugh, Mr Green discovered that he himself was really part-

dandy as well. Now he understands that the critic 'must be ready to be a bit of a Diaghilev as well as a bit of a Leavis'. Finding this combination within himself, he senses that the dandy is the man of the future. It is Nabokov – for Mr Green the one dandy who seized manliness with both hands (and anyway not English, so beyond Mr Green's orbit of resentment) –

who holds the key to the locked door of England's dungeon. I hold on to that sense as some promise that my own development is not leading me up and out into a self-designed empyrean.

One thing that will surely not be said of Mr Green is that he takes himself too lightly. (Strange, though, that his gallery of categories omits the Prig.)

As for the details of Mr Green's cultural history and literary criticism, they include too many absurdities to recount here. Sufficient to say that any useful analysis or reportage comes from elsewhere; consult the footnotes, which are scrupulous. Mr Green accepts with uniform trust everything that he finds in print, so he is unreliable even when derivative.

Despite all this (and much more) his book has a real, if transient, fascination. Karl Miller, reviewing Mr Green's first book in these pages in 1961, hit on the reason: 'the reader who finds certain of his dearest prejudices in this book, as I do, will find them greatly stretched and distorted.' Such distortions, never without interest, have grown more extreme and more repellent in Mr Green's later work. *Children of the Sun* takes an issue – the effect of class and coterie on literary culture – which any reader will acknowledge as important, and trivialises it into petulance over costume parties. Mr Green called his first book *Mirror for Anglo-Saxons*. In *Children of the Sun* he holds a distorting mirror up to authentic ideas and difficult problems – and out of that mirror stare back grotesque caricatures grinning with self-satisfaction.

Peter Jenkins

Sweet FO

The Diplomats by GEOFFREY MOORHOUSE
Cape £7.50

The timing of the book is perfect. The most glamorous Foreign Secretary since Anthony Eden has been appointed; he is considering a report which casts doubt upon the need for a separate Diplomatic Service; meanwhile ambassadors are in the news. Geoffrey Moorhouse paints in the background to these controversies. This is not an academic book, it is not another study of the purposes and techniques of diplomacy – not another search-party for Britain's proverbially lost role. It is a reportorial book, one man's unpretentious account of what diplomats do, where and how they do it, what sort of people they and their wives happen to be, and what kind of lives they lead.

Mr Moorhouse did not set out to show that the Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service are ludicrously far-flung or financially overstretched for 'a major power of the second order' (Duncan Report, 1969) or 'a medium power of the first rank', which is how Mr Edward Heath preferred to characterise Britain's declined standing in the world. Nor was he out to expose the snobishness or fudduddyness of what is fashionably regarded as an effete, privileged elite; rather he seems to have approached the subject with an open mind and, like most people who have dealings with the FO, to have been impressed as well as charmed and a little glamour-struck by what he found.

The glamour is irresistible.

There is a lustre attached to the position of Foreign Secretary that is unequalled elsewhere in British political life below the level of Premier . . . The Foreign Office represents glamour, exotic horizons, and just the faint echo of a bar or two from *Rule, Britannia* carried on the dying winds of change; whereas the Treasury has never really amounted to anything more than boring sums, blasted bills and an intermittent hole in the trouser pocket.

The author, we should remember, is himself a romantic man who in previous books has relived the exploits of the missionaries in darkest Africa and ridden across the Sahara alone on a camel. Moorhouse tries to avoid overt nostalgia in writing about the FO and he doesn't – as so many critics do – indulge in greater delusions of power than the practitioners are themselves held guilty of; nonetheless, he finds himself continually tugged at by the past as he visits the great embassies or becomes lost – physically and in time – in the echoing marble corridors of the FO itself. This poses problems, for Mr Moorhouse was supposed to be writing a book about the Diplomatic Service of today but all the time keeps finding that the old anecdotes are the best and that the present is a bit of a bore – not so different from his idea of life at the Treasury.

His reporter's eye is on the lookout for physical details, and in this case that means chiefly buildings. It is impossible not to experience nostalgia when visiting, say, the embassy in Cairo, set in its own compound on the bank of the Nile, or in Tehran another compound which serves as a paradise for tropical birds. In Tehran he noticed, as I have done myself, that

outside the Ambassador's office a row of portraits hangs upon the wall. You find similar photographs in every embassy, but in few places do they subtly tell you more about transformed international relationships than these. The first is of Sir Percy Loraine, taken in 1922, and it is followed by one of Sir Reginald Hoare, presenting his credentials in 1931. Then comes Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, who was here between 1934 and 1936. These were the days when Great Britain ruled a lot of the world and put many distant potentates firmly in their place.

It all seems a long time ago, and yet it was all so recent. Our ecclesiastical history, or the history of the monarchy and parliament, can be read in the architecture of centuries, but virtually the whole of the era of British world-power, which is the most haunting of all our national traditions, is contained within the memory of one mid-Victorian

building – Gilbert Scott's FO, which also housed the India Office and the Colonial Office. Scott was commissioned by Palmerston, who did not quite live to see the new building opened in 1866. This reviewer was born in 1934, the year in which Knatchbull-Hugessen presented his credentials in Tehran. That was only yesterday and yet the whole world of Knatchbull-Hugessen today seems as long gone as Palmerston's.

Of course, as British influence has declined the larger has grown the bureaucracy for pursuing British interests around the world. The less we can push potentates around the more paper we push around instead. The telegram traffic, which is vast and expensive, is a constant focus of the critics, who start from the assumption that the FO is one great profligate delusion. Undoubtedly there is a great deal of bureaucratic waste there as elsewhere in Whitehall but, as Moorhouse shows, the growth in telegram traffic is in large part the result of improved communications technology. Messages which now take minutes from desk to desk used to take, as recently as 1945, ten hours to encipher, five hours to transmit by morse, and another ten hours to decipher. Those conditions may have been favourable to brevity, and literature, but those were the days also before the information explosion, before the flood of commercial and technical information which today passes from country to country in the conduct of the diplomacy of inter-dependence.

What makes the Diplomatic Service so vulnerable to criticism is that its modern functions are performed within the traditions, sometimes according to the styles and, more often than not, from the very same buildings that we associate with the recent imperial past. One response is to resent the anachronism and complain about its extravagance; another might be to congratulate ourselves on the inheritance of a superb machine beyond the reach or wildest dreams of any run-of-the-mill medium-sized power. Moorhouse is aware of the questions. Is diplomacy outmoded? Is British diplomacy too expensive or directed towards the wrong ends? Is it not time for the Diplomatic Service to be merged with the home Civil Service or for the FO to become no more than the coordinator of Whitehall's external relations? In the course of his travels and conversations Moorhouse picks up a few insights; but his book is far too impressionistic, far too determinedly readable, to be of much service in answering such questions.

A great deal of what is visible of diplomacy does seem to be a waste of time and resources, although no more so for Britain than for other countries and a great deal less so than for the African republics who spend a significant portion of their GNPs maintaining appearances in Manhattan. Moorhouse has a sense of the sun setting over the British Diplomatic Service, as he makes plain in a valedictory note, but it is a sense born more perhaps of his feeling for the romantic past than of any clear notion as to what the Foreign Office ought to be doing or ought not to be doing. This is, I suspect, because the past is too close and too haunting, and because diplomacy, and the diplomat, arouse strange and conflicting

emotions in all of us who have lived to see a world disappearing before our eyes.

Alan Ryan

Work Song

Simone Weil by SIMONE PETREMENT
translated by Raymond Rosenthal *Moorhouse* £10

Mlle Pétrement's life of Simone Weil is avowedly a work of hagiography, a biography for the Saint-Simoneians. It will do nothing to disarm those who think, as General de Gaulle certainly did, and as George Steiner still apparently does, that she was more or less dotty. The risible elements in her existence are neither disguised nor explained away – many people would think that her fear of personal contact, her sexual aloofness, her obsession with personal purity, might owe much to her family's obsessive concern with hygiene. This once led the infant Simone to flee screaming when a family friend kissed her, inconsolable until the taint was washed away with soap and water. Mlle Pétrement tells the story without comment, content to accept her later obsession with the purity of her own conduct entirely in her own terms, and unconcerned to argue that it might be a merely pathological trait. Similarly, the remarkably ineffectual fashion in which she translated her ideas into action is recounted absolutely straightforwardly. After graduating from the Ecole Normale, Simone Weil went as Professor of Philosophy to Le Puy, thence to Auxerre and Roanne. She was not a good teacher; she loved her students and taught them almost nothing. She was not a very competent political activist either; she led a revolt of the unemployed of Le Puy, who had been set to breaking stones for a meagre wage, but alienated a good many more orthodox unionists and organisers in the process. Her former teacher at the *Lycée Henri Quatre*, the philosopher Alain, remarked that of all his pupils only the Red Virgin would contrive to call the unemployed to strike.

She worked in a factory during 1934-35, thinking that she had to understand at first hand the condition of the proletariat on whose behalf she was fighting; but she was slow and clumsy, smashed the machines she worked on, maddened the machine setters, and would have certainly got the sack if she had in fact been a member of the proletariat rather than the daughter of a doctor and a member of the intellectual bourgeoisie. When she went to Spain, her anxious parents went after her, encouraged by her trade-unionist friends who urged them to make sure she didn't do anything silly. In the event, she managed to do nothing worse than kick over a cooking pot and badly burn her leg – which allowed her parents to get her away from the war and back to safety. When the second world war started, she was eager to take part in something really dangerous. One idea was to parachute arms and soldiers into Czechoslovakia behind

the German lines; to the objection that this would get both the Czechs and the invaders killed, she only answered, 'So be it, they will die, but they will die with dignity.'

At the same time, she also had a scheme for a corps of nurses who would work in no man's land between the opposing forces, an idea which no doubt stemmed from the genuine horror she felt when thinking of the state of wounded men left to suffer during a battle, but whose attraction in the end owed much more to the fact that the nurses, who would suffer appalling casualties, could thereby share the sufferings of the soldiers. And in all such schemes it was essential that she should be one of the sacrificial victims.

The story ended with her death in an English nursing home in August 1943; she was barely 34 years old, and she died of the ravages of deliberate self-neglect. Mlle Pétrement is anxious to establish that she did not starve herself to death, as the coroner's inquest had it. And that does, indeed, seem too crude and too brutal an account. Rather, she had for two years refused to eat more than the rations of an inhabitant of occupied France; when she was found to have tuberculosis early in 1943 it was too late for her to start eating normally. The result was that none of her treatments worked, and her heart gave way.

Mlle Pétrement's book contains a great deal, even for those who don't care to speculate why a Jewess should be tempted to join the Catholic church but nevertheless draw back from doing so, or why she kept



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up such an ambivalent relationship with both orthodox communists and Trotskyites. Although she was a lousy workman, Simone Weil wrote more interestingly and perceptively about industrial work than any of the cheerful Marxists of her day; she saw straight through Lenin's enthusiasm for Taylorism and condemned the Soviet obsession with production as merely another version of the tyranny of products over their producers.

In addition, she was braver and clearer-sighted than Trotsky about the extent to

which Lenin as well as Stalin had betrayed Marx's vision of freedom, and she was not taken in by the hope that the 'bureaucratic deformations' of the workers' state were merely blemishes on a healthy growth. All this made her pessimistic, no doubt, and perhaps fed the conviction that the only real good we can do is to our own souls. But it made her sceptical of all earthly authority, and gave her work a freshness and a liveliness which a mind better adapted to the world of commonsense could never have achieved.

Peter Conrad

In the Safari Park

Gaudete by TED HUGHES *Faber* £4.50

Ted Hughes's bestiary was at first a restive zoo, stocked by creatures whose brutish instincts had surrendered to aesthetic captivity: a war-weary tom-cat, a fatigued lion and tiger, silent sculptural horses. When they menaced or destroyed, they did so behind bars or glass, like the pacing jaguar or the cannibalistic pike. In the early poems wild things were tamed by art and immobilised as images. As Hughes has progressed, the animals have been uncaged. The wodge scavenges at large, the crow flails 'immensely' through astral vacuums. Their freedom has been fatal to Hughes's art. He is like a naturalist who has gone ape: the verbal skills which cajoled subjects into obedience, the patience which coaxed the thought-fox into the open, have been abandoned, and the poet now imitates the cawing and yelping of the predators he admires. *Crow* prides itself on making sounds of a 'croaking grotesquerie appropriate to the black beast, which retches when God makes it utter the word 'Love'. In *Gaudete* the bestiary has turned to bestiality. The work describes the lecherous and murderous excesses of a demonised country parson, but, numbed by the hyperbolic shrillness of its own abominations, the language recoils into insensitivity, and either limps in prose (for which the publisher supplies the engaging excuse that 'the narrative . . . was originally intended as a film scenario') or tries to startle itself into verse by exclamatory repetition ('A mass grave! The whole street is a mass-grave!'). It is of interest only as a measure of Hughes's degeneration.

That decline can be charted by comparing three Hughes jaguars. The first, from *The Hawk in the Rain*, is caged in quatrains: the beast's transformation of its cell into 'wildernesses of freedom' by the discipline of its pacing is matched by the poem's formal feat of containing such energy in a flimsy stanzaic prison. The jaguar rages 'on a short fierce fuse'. So does the poem: it is fierce because it is short, it is tense because it is elegant. 'Second Glance at a Jaguar' in *Wodwo* is all threshing inaccurate gesture, with none of the earlier mesmeric control. Unconfined by any stanza form, the language disperses itself in hit-or-miss metamorphoses: sometimes the jaguar is an

Aztec disemboweller, sometimes a butterfly, sometimes a prayer-wheel. The blundering randomness of the language afflicts the beast as well: this jaguar doesn't tread out its frustration into a dance like the first, but drags and grinds about 'gracelessly'. It is less an organism than a stertorous machine: 'his body is just the engine shoving' forward a stump-like head. The third jaguar has a walk-on, or rather drive-on, role in *Gaudete*. One of the poem's cuckolds, Dunworth the golfing architect, burns across country in 'his white Jaguar sports'. The detail is of course a sorry self-parody, but it discloses a subtler imaginative corruption.

For Hughes has patented the idea of the jaguar, like an industrialist whose success in harnessing the prodigies of nature convinces him that he's invented them. In the first poem, the jaguar stirs Hughes because he can't understand it, because it is as mysterious and meditatively private as an anchorite. In the second, it interests him only as the pretext for the abstruse new things he has to say about it: the title, 'Second Glance', admits the staleness of this self-soliciting. In the third, the jaguar is no longer even an incitement to desperate ingenuity but the label for a bright new possession, not a symbol but a status symbol.

In the meantime, the poetry has become automatic, not in the Blakean sense of visionary babbling which Hughes intends, but in the mechanical sense. The language has the facility of a car with automatic gears: it carries Hughes along and copes with difficulties on his behalf, does his responding for him, just as Dunworth's struggle with 'the road's variety' is fought for him by his tilting, bobbing sports car. Hughes is like a conceited motorist who imagines that he, rather than the contraption of rubber and metal he squats inside, can take credit for the distances traversed. It is more than absurd coincidence that one of his characters should drive a car with a brand-name derived from a famous Hughes beast, for the image is now merchandise, and what was once original is now institutionalised as a registered trademark, affixed automatically to the product. The characters of *Gaudete* are individualised only by their cars. They are what they

drive - Dunworth the trendy Jag, Westlake a Daimler, his wife a white Ford Cortina, the squire a Range Rover, the demoniac clergyman Lumb a blue Austin van.

Like an adroit property-speculator, Hughes has sold his zoo for conversion into a parking-lot. This means, of course, disposing of the animals. *Gaudete* does so with abattoir efficiency: in a welter of Orghastic carnage, a cow is disembowelled, a pigeon decapitated, a dog battered with a chain, a stag stabbed, a fish impaled, and a rabbit mauled by a ferret. One bull is shot, another has its horns bloodily sawn off. (The poem's hysteria turns even the making of a sandwich into mushroom-mutilation: a maenadic housewife slices the glans of a fungus with a razor-blade; even interior decoration is queasily visceral: Dunworth's house is designed 'in ultra colour . . . like the demortalised organs of a body').

Thus his beasts are slaughtered to make expensive consumer items; the thought-fox of *The Hawk in the Rain* has been gutted and looped around the neck of Maud the housekeeper as a fur wrap. Occasionally a beast is invoked to vivify a Gothic stage-prop - a dagger, for instance, unsheaths like a snake - but generally the animals are now battery-operated, clichés switched on for spasms of factitious action: the dog which gores Lumb is like a power-saw, the body it ravages is a 'radio-transmitter, a standard structure'.

Those who decry Hughes as an anti-intellectual are paying him too fulsome a compliment. He is not a prophet but a profiteer, a technocrat who despoils nature not in a fury of elemental delight but in the hope of making it safe for a leisured consumerism. Despite its archetypal turbidity, the poem's actual references are to the affluent world of sports cars, power saws, fur coats and jet planes (the rampaging women prickly 'like passengers in an aircraft, just as it lifts off the runway'). Hughes the myth-maker betrays himself as a moneyed worldling, adept in spotting the makes of cars and impressive in reciting the brand-names of his instruments of death: Westlake totes a double-barrelled twelve-bore, Dunworth a target pistol 'with which he is expert', Lumb a mere pistol without a pedigree; as the Westlakes are a two-car family, so Major Hagen has a cabinet of high-velocity rifles, from which he selects a double-barrelled Purdey to slay ring-doves and a Mannlicher .318 to stalk the priapic vicar.

With a calamitous innocence, *Gaudete* everywhere gives the lie to its creator's pretensions. Its archetypes, posing as reclamations from a lost history, are as glossily phony as the latest fashion; even Hughes's cruelty is no more than an inverted sentimentality. The early Hughes revered animals because they were secretive, discreet and autonomous; now he cannot forgive them this self-involved integrity and kills them to rid them of it. Once dead, they are the unresisting victims of the things he feels about them, whereas alive they quite rightly ignored him. Hughes has abused his poetic gift as outrageously as he has brutalised these animals; but poetry is not a dumb, unprotesting domestic pet, and has quietly revenged itself by deserting him.

Susannah Clapp

Whirligig

Lovers and Tyrants by FRANCINE DU PLESSIX
GRAY *Deutsch* £4.95

The Sweets of Pimlico by A. N. WILSON
Secker & Warburg £3.50

Double Trouble by BARNEY PLATTS-MILLS
Duckworth £3.95

Quiet as a Nun by ANTONIA FRASER *Weidenfeld* £3.95

It comes as little surprise to discover that the two categories featured in Francine du Plessix Gray's title are held by the narrator to be more or less synonymous. It is more of a surprise – given the romantic plaintiveness of the novel's opening pages – to find that their coincidence is made to hinge mainly on a dogma of the obstructiveness, obtuseness or incompetence of men.

In fact, this bulky account of the turning-points in one woman's life is really two books. One is a picturesque selection of domestic scenes, viewed with the uneasy clarity of an implicated outsider. Since the families in question are propertied French and rootless Slavs, these scenes aren't without their sentimentalities (much is made of instantly recognisable 'ironic' family eyes), but they are on the whole enjoyably expansive, striking off individual faces and moments – a Russian grandfather glued to his radio set in Hershey, a young convent-bound cousin taking whiffs of ether – with distinctiveness and ease. These qualities are much less in evidence when the novel addresses itself – as it does with increasing and eventually overwhelming fervency – to Stephanie's search for self. Trudging dutifully from a sadistic and garrulous Frenchman to a successful, puritanical husband who thinks 'words are shit', she winds up with a slogan-spinning but serious bisexual youth in Arizona. Absorbed in weighing the various ways in which these alternatives are unsatisfactory (hardly a difficult undertaking), the novel's more arresting definitions ('this marriage is so big and kosher it's like a government') become deluged by waves of rhetoric about possible transfigurations, in which a 'constellation of semens' figures alongside laboured denunciations of the body as chattel. It's difficult to see how any of this would help someone sense that 'the night is ashine with splendour and with hope', and more difficult still to feel that an identity quest which involves so much narrowing of generousities and such flailing prose was justified in the first place.

The Sweets of Pimlico supplies a more quizzical account of manipulations and affections: in its cooler, more modestly-scaled way, it contains as many reversals and discoveries as *Lovers and Tyrants*, but does so with little thumping home of points and no sense of a quest being undertaken.

Evelyn Tradescant likes reading Darwin, has little time for aesthetics and, confronted with the 'soupy' looks of those around her, considers with some interest the possibility that "falling in love" was not part of

her repertoire'. At the beginning of the novel, Evelyn is chiefly interested in beetles (Mud-dwelling, Great-Diving, and Whirligig); by the end, she has committed incest, been present at the bombing of the National Gallery, gained money and a fiancé, and even acquired a bemused concern for other people. The novel's more dramatic events confirm rather than precipitate its real concerns, which are sensible and sensibly handled – to do with the disconnectedness of people's lives and the heady attractions provided by enormous wealth and purposeful mysteriousness. The last are ushered in by Theo Gormann, an exuberantly enigmatic OAP who picks Evelyn up in Kensington Gardens. By displaying intense inquisitiveness about her (rather colourless) life while elaborately shielding his own (which has incorporated Nazis, CND, investments in toffee factories, and Evelyn's brother), he manages to take Evelyn over. One of the acutenesses of this alert novel is to show that 'taking over' involves not only the pinioning of a person's time and preoccupations (the unromantic Evelyn is regaled with large doses of Yeats), but also, and more trappingly, imitation: as Evelyn becomes more tantalised by Mr Gormann's manoeuvres with his friends and money, she becomes more manipulative; obsession with her friend's secretiveness breeds her own brand of concealments.

In *Double Trouble* (over-revealingly subtitled 'a story for a horror film') a crane driver, accused by his girl-friend of never making a 'normal' friend, discovers that his

work-mate is in intimate contact with the Devil, and proceeds to gather information about the joys of gobbling people up and the difficulties of diabolical existence. Despite some predictable social needling – about politicians and others – the expected slabs of metaphysics are absent, as is the implication that a parable is being enacted. A sprightliness of tone and an engaging attitude towards the characters (who spend a lot of time accusing each other of batteness or boringness) whisk the novel along, producing cinegenic scenes and a few jokes. But the funniness isn't consistent enough to overcome resentment at producing £4 for a skinny display of high spirits.

These theological considerations do not find a place in Antonia Fraser's tale of convent capers, a heavily propertied but lightly written thriller. The proceedings are presided over by one Jemima Shore, television interviewer and one-time convent girl who has an eager eye for nunnish delights and deprivations, and remains relatively cool when confronted with kidnapped schoolgirls, candleless chapels and whispered warnings. Since the novel's villains turn out to be almost poignantly recognisable for what they are, her non-sense attitude is eminently justified, and carries the novel calmly over the wilder sensationalisms suggested by its title. But a certain amount of more vigorous action, and rather fewer general reflections ('How quickly autumn passed! Like every pleasure, it seemed momentary'), might have made a pleasant book more exciting.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

John Coleman

And the Moral Is?

Private Vices and Public Virtues (X) Prince Charles

Crossways Electric, Covent Garden

The Seven-Per-Cent Solution (AA) Plaza 2

The Cassandra Crossing (A) Empire

The ICA is currently presenting a short season, ending on 9 June, of films by that bemusing Hungarian director, Miklós Jancsó, 'one of the most exhilaratingly individual talents in world cinema', according to the programme handout. Earlier, the handout raps a few critical knuckles:

It seems that every time one of his films opens in London the reviewers trot out the same old story about it being a repetition or refinement of the previous one; a 'masterpiece', maybe, but basically a working-out of the same old personal obsessions in the same old mannerist style. . . .

If the cap fits, wear it and be damned: I don't recall throwing the word masterpiece around in connection with *Red Psalm* or *Rome Wants Another Caesar* or *Elektra* but I certainly found them preciously high on style, perilously low on content. By a happy stroke of timing, the latest Jancsó, *Private Vices and Public Virtues*, has just opened in the West End – and here we go again. Most (though not all) of Jancsó's films have been set at some specific point in Hungarian history: *The Round-Up* in the 1860s, *Silence and Cry* 1919-20, *The Confrontation* 1947, *Agnus Dei* 1919, and so on. The new affair is, then, something of an odd man out: an empire is referred to and many of the physical trappings establish it as a way-out version of the old Austro-Hungarian one, up to and including submerged allusions to the Mayerling tragedy; but there are other emphases, notably on casual nudity, that disrupt any notion of easy parallels. The director is on record as wanting to portray a genuinely 'imaginary' world.

Thus the action is confined to a vast country estate, where a prince (Lajos Balázsovits) lies naked on a heap of hay, half-listening to a little German band oompahing nearby, dallying with chubby, sexy Therese, his one-time nurse, before rousing himself sufficiently to remove his sleeping wife's panties and display their embroidered imperial arms to giggling companions. Not to be outdone in roguishness, naughty nanny pees in the despised lady's hat. And by now one has detected something of an innovation for Jancsó-fanciers. If *Elektra* was composed of only 11 shots – such long, patrolling takes being the director's absolute trade-mark – things happen more choppy this time: no fewer than 343 pieces have been joined together. An ingenious colleague has suggested this fragmentation may result in a sense of *coitus interruptus*; perhaps, but he is on safer ground in pointing

out the lessening of suspense that results. It transpires that the prince is expected to beget an heir on his wife, lives only for the moment, and has recently seen a band of fellow-conspirators against the king arrested. The wife is discarded when his friends and lovers, the Duke and the Duke's sister Sofia, arrive. Wild events succeed one another: arrangements for a *scandalous* party, when photographs of the high bourgeoisie mollocking will be taken; buxom nanny doctoring the wine; circus people and dancing peasants joining in; the humiliation of an officer sent to demand the prince's return to the capital; the final, inevitable come-uppance, with the prince, the duke, Sofia and a beautiful hermaphrodite, Mary, all shot down on the king's orders. Only the bodies of the prince and Sofia will be preserved, to bolster the Mayerling-like fiction that they died after a suicide pact.

And the moral is? Make hay while the sun shines? All revolt is doomed unless taken seriously? Or, as the film cries out, whipping the frenzied party-goers to further effort during a punishing dance marathon, 'Excess is good for the health'? One notes some of the material quoted for publicity purposes: 'a film . . . which is to pornography what caviare is to a take-away hamburger', 'the completely explicit hermaphrodite seems not only quite normal but immensely desirable', and one wonders. It is known that Jancsó himself is eager for larger audiences and he has made a work of considerable visual beauty, packed with erotic fun-and-games and more idiosyncratic stuff. 'Baa, baa, black sheep' is sung somewhere around the time several turkeys undergo indignities and that visiting officer is made to jump about. The ubiquitous imperial masks are sprayed with mouthfuls of wine; one even ends up strapped to a pretty lady's pubes. There is an extraordinarily prolonged scene of the assorted lovers caressing near the close, so stretched-out as to allow one to reflect that there is a screw, as it were, loose in the director's thinking or predispositions. For a very short period, somewhat in among the bacchanalian revels and demented dancers, Jancsó creates a feeling of pure, irresponsible, infectious joy. Elsewhere, all the giggling and guffawing in the world – and most of it seems to have found a home here – cannot dispel a chilling, sensual hollowness. These are mere things pawing at one another.

Crossways is a silent movie, made in 1928 by the director of *A Page of Madness*. Teinosuke Kinugasa once more resorts to a kind of impressionism in this, the last work he was to create for his own company and, according to Anderson and Richie, 'one of the milestones of Japanese cinema', even if they do get the plot wrong. This profoundly gloomy yet quite compelling tale was filmed

substantially at night and, at that, amid sets painted dark grey. It shows the deep love of a dressmaking sister for her spend-thrift brother, himself fatally in the coils of 'a painted beauty who takes all men by storm', as the titles have it. Things are unlikely to turn out well with such for openers, nor do they. Little sister narrowly escapes a fate worse than death and big brother dies, having recovered the sight he lost early in the proceedings, only to see his light-of-love betray him. Extraordinary use of big close-ups (the villain's gaping, rotting mouth), lapping dissolves and nightmarish montage effects: if not a milestone, no millstone either.

Herbert Ross's *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution*, more mucking about with Holmes, has the cocaine-addicted doctor trickily persuaded by faithful Watson to go to Vienna and, once there, submit to treatment by Dr Sigmund Freud. Cured, he solves the mystery of a disappearing redhead, as well as realising his arch-rival Moriarty is no more than an ex-maths-tutor who once seduced his mother. In running order, Holmes is played tolerably by the utterly wrong-looking Nicol Williamson, Watson by Robert Duvall ('I feah the fawg hez delayed arse'), Freud to the hilt by Alan Arkin, redhead ditto by Vanessa Redgrave, and near-senile Moriarty as one of Laurence Olivier's better old crumply wheezers. Ken Adam's sets and Oswald Morris's photography are fine. Everything else – story and direction – is feeble: one doesn't know whether to yawn or cry. George Pan Cosmatos's *The Cassandra Crossing* is an even worse misfire, involving the persons of Richard Harris, Sophia Loren, Burt Lancaster, Ava Gardner, Ingrid Thulin and Lee Strasberg in a farrago that hovers uneasily between a disaster movie and a conspiracy one. The would-be exciting part takes place on a train, bound from Geneva to Stockholm. Talk about hedging your bets. The silly story uses a handy new virus, the Pneumonic Plague, as its gimmick and is helpfully syllabised out for slower viewers, thus: 'I notice your latest book made the best-seller list', 'It could be . . . He's a brilliant neuro-surgeon', 'Remember you're a doctor and a damn good one', and – best of all – 'we have established visual contact with the train'. Don't.

Television

Ian Hamilton

Bet Your Boots

A friend of mine has thought up this interesting new way of making money. Each year, it seems, he listens carefully to Jack Charlton's footballing predictions and then puts his shirt, socks and anything else he can get hold of on the team Jack says will lose. He assures me that it never fails. This year, the curse of the Giraffe fell on Liverpool – the better team, all sane men would agree, but fatally demoralised by the pre-

match spectacle of Charlton, flushed with London Weekend wine, being 100 per cent certain that they'd walk it.

The occasion was *Who'll Win the Cup?* (LWT), which annually features a table-load of gorged pundits swapping guesses about the following day's game and snapping up half-mouthfuls during clips. Viewers join in at about 'the coffee stage' and there is Jack, affably on top of things. Lucid, informed and thoroughly convincing, he contrives to persuade us that he has drunk more and thus in some strange way become more sober than anyone else present; he is managerially harsh with any players on the panel who are rash enough to venture judgments, and engagingly offhand with the non-playing chairman Brian Moore. Even the most amateur of eyes can spot it: he knows best.

And so he does, if it weren't for the messy business of the game itself, in which the most inexpertly odd things do tend to happen. Jack's boob this year was not to know that Manchester United's winning goal would be bounced in off Jimmy Greenhoff's boob; but if it hadn't been that, it would have been something equally absurd. At half-time, both Charlton and that other veteran forecaster Don Revie were telling us that there was only one team on the park; even as they spoke, we felt the Treble slip away. And we felt also that season upon season this will be the fate of all who try to do what Leeds kept almost doing; at the last hurdle, they'll be tipped to win by Big Jack and the Boss.

I tuned in a bit late to Monday night's *Tonight* (BBC1) and was thus disconcerted to find Ludovic Kennedy berating a white-haired old lady for having published a book 'full of obscene sexual practices'. Who could she be, this kindly-looking matron, permed and proper? 'I had to bring in enough to shock people,' she piped winningly, 'without being pornographic'. Kennedy shot her a very superior 'that's what they all say' look and returned manfully to the attack. A bit much, one idly thought: why shouldn't the old dear write filthy books if that's what keeps her perky? Which just goes to show . . .

Awakening ten minutes or so later, there she was again but this time *she* was chastising the by now extremely shifty-looking Kennedy for *his* loose attitudes to sex. She, it transpired, was all for entering the holy state of wedlock 'as a whole person - *Fresh!*', and she looked pretty sure that Ludo had bungled that particular assignment. Ludo himself looked as if he was trying to remember whether he had or not; but in any case, he pleaded, 'What about a sailor who has come ashore after a few weeks at sea and is feeling *randy*? What would you advise *him*?' 'It's not up to *me* to advise sailors.'

What on earth was going on? There were further obscure exchanges about Sir Hugh Green, the Bishop of Woolwich, and the evil effects of the Sixties satire boom, but I'm afraid I never fathomed the identity of the old dirtmongress, nor grasped how she squared her evidently still lively interest in the lowest of low matters with the near-prim assault she mounted on poor Kennedy's credentials. But then why was he so hard on *her* raunchy publications and

yet so soft on those hot matelots? It's all getting just a bit too much for me; I think I'll write to Mrs Whitehouse.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Transposeurs

Variations on *The Merchant of Venice*
Open Space

For the West Theatre Upstairs

Happy Yellow Bush

Lionel New London

Rolls-Hyphen-Royce Shaftesbury

The converted post office on the Euston Road that now claims to be the Open Space is, we're told, a temporary home only; but it seems less ramshackle and tenebrous than the basement the company handed over to the property developers last year. It is also rather kinder to the rump. Padded seats rise in an arc above a stage as broad and deep as the auditorium itself, room enough for the most frantic fruits of Charles Marowitz's imagination. He is, of course, still the company's boss, and it is one of his adaptations of Shakespeare that's waiting for us on the post-office counter, a curious bundle of transposed lines, transformed characters, updated ideas and out-of-context snippets from *The Jew of Malta*. Vladek Sheybal's cold-eyed Shylock may or may not be a member of the Stern Gang, but Venice is certainly the code-name for a section of British-ruled Palestine at the time of the blowing-up of the King David Hotel, an event re-enacted for us with the aid of news-agency photos. Lorenzo, Gratiano and the rest are officers in the army of occupation, and Lord Chief Justice Goddard, or someone disagreeably like him, presides over one of the more eccentric civil actions to have hit a British court in modern times. Needless to say, Barry Stanton's fat-cat Antonio doesn't surrender a pound of flesh, though his spectacular girth suggests he could well afford it: he does, however, come to a bad and not very Shakespearian end, if we're to credit the terrorists who come to disrupt the trial with machine-guns in the last reel.

There's no point accusing Mr Marowitz of messing about with his betters, because he would promptly agree with the charge and demand to be judged on his own merits, not Shakespeare's. And why not? I myself resisted his *Macbeth*, fenced uneasily with his *Othello*, and finally succumbed to a *Measure for Measure* that was, to put it no higher, an apt critical gloss on the original play. But his *Merchant* troubles me, because it replaces the anti-Semitism that presumably pleased Elizabethan audiences with attitudes that ask for scarcely less mindless assent from the sort of groundlings who visit the Open Space. A reactionary and unfashionable play has become a fashionable 'progressive' one, with the Christian faction reduced to hypocrites, bigots and sexual adventurers, crudish ex-

amples of British hubris in the colonies. Even Bassanio's love for Portia seems entirely predatory, though this isn't surprising, since Thelma Holt transforms the lady into a brittle socialite who spends her days having facials and scribbling ducats in her Nat-West chequebook. At any rate, he appears in Belmont in the successive guises of Morocco and Aragon, and so is able to test out the gold and silver caskets before plumping for the lead. When he and his friends finally get their come-uppance, it is a clear case of the oppressor overthrown, the imperialist smashed, the biter bit - and which of Mr Marowitz's fans is going to quarrel with that? It is all very ingenious; but anyone who feels that the function of drama is to open people's minds to the complexities around them, rather than to simplify and close, is likely to wish the ingenuity redirected.

Whether or not we English created a Hagannah Shylock, we clearly did much to bring about Field Marshal Dr Idi Amin. In his *For the West*, Michael Hastings reminds us that even the NS wasn't too distressed by the fall of the 'difficult' Obote, and others were openly delighted to see a burly veteran of Her Majesty's rifles, albeit a black one, thrust his mammoth paw round Uganda. We gave him his respect for military discipline and, less deliberately, his resentment of the white tyrannies of yesteryear, his bitterness, suspicion and xenophobia. So, at any rate, Mr Hastings suggests, and it is hardly his fault if such findings sound a little lame given 800,000 tortured, butchered and mutilated Ugandans. This is, after all, a perfectly honourable and decent play. Its author and his leading actor, Rudolph Walker, refuse to patronise Amin as a comic, a booby or a melodramatic monster, or to let us do so. There's nothing sensational about the plot that has been concocted out of the black Macbeth's fear of assassination, and nothing particularly improbable about the ending, in which he's plugged by his Seyton, a sycophantic British officer who doubles as the country's security chief. But Mr Hastings fails, as perhaps he was doomed to fail, in his appointed aim, which is to explain Amin, or at least to find some plausible, comprehensible shape in the pink jelly seething paranoically inside that massive skull. That demands more knowledge, more psychological acumen, than can easily be mustered by one socially-conscious dramatist writing from his eyrie in England.

Happy Yellow, which opens an 'American season' at the Bush, is an entertaining, witty piece, though at first brush it could be mistaken for *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas and Vi* transplanted to New York. Actually, its author, Tina Brown, is considerably more acid than Pam Gems about life in and around one of those apartments advertised every day in *Evening Standard* and *Village Voice* - 'wanted, thrd grl, own bdrm, shr ktchn, \$60 a week'. She takes at least as disenchanted a view of the male world outside, which here seems fairly uniform in its greed and salacity, if uneven in its sexual competence, and a much more cynical one of the women themselves, who don't hesitate to ditch one another if there's an emotional killing to be made. There's a side of me, though perhaps a soft and soggy

one, that would like to quarrel with Miss Brown's conclusions, but the only fault it can pick with her evidence is an occasional tendency to verbal caricature – do people, even in Woody Allen territory, talk of 'orgasmic disfunction' or flounce from the room with merry shout of 'I gotta get to my masturbation workshop'? In all other respects, I defer to her superior knowledge of women alone.

Little room (thank God) for *Lionel*, which proves that Bart's songs, no great shakes at the best of times, are still smaller shakes when wrenched from their dramatic context; and as little for the third Douglas Home to hit my incredulous typewriter within six weeks – a lazy and often banal biography of the car-people, played by Alfred Marks and Peter Egan and narrated by Wilfred Hyde White, who gives an astonishingly convincing imitation of someone with only the vaguest idea of his lines.

Art

John Spurling

If Not, What?

The Summer Exhibition Royal Academy
Painting and Printing Degree Show Royal
College of Art

R. B. Kitaj Marlborough Fine Art
Edward Burra Memorial Exhibition Levevre
Gallery

If the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition is anything to go by, we have reached a period of synthesis among painters. Figure-painters and abstractionists, photo-realists and followers of Sickert, landscapists and surrealists: serried here in their profusion (nearly 1,500 exhibits), climbing the walls of 15 rooms, all are more or less equal, none can claim to represent the van or the tradition. Significantly, the Academy has awarded its Jubilee Prize to Leonard McComb, whose *Portrait of a Lady* – its network of soft pencil lines suggesting something ancient, perhaps fossilised, discovered at the back of a cave or under water – has the dubious merit of being both sufficiently unlike anything else and at the same time an amalgam of all. The Royal College of Art Degree Show (which ended last Wednesday) pointed the same way. The spectrum of styles extended to the conceptual and political, but there was the same sense of freedom of choice for the artist, coupled with a general air of indecision, as of a flock of birds which has momentarily stopped flying in one direction and turned in on itself before discovering another.

R. B. Kitaj, who organised an exhibition of mostly figurative art for the Arts Council last year and incidentally first drew public attention to McComb, is seen by some as leading a reaction towards the figurative. His own recent work at the Marlborough is less figure-painting than subject-painting, in the sense that it seems to lean towards an intellectual meaning – perhaps even a message. Yet paradoxically the subjects of

his larger canvases are so vague or private that one's attention reverts to their abstract qualities, composition and colour.

The Goyaesque title of *If Not, Not*, for example, refers to the ancient coronation oath of Aragon: 'We who are as good as you swear to you as our king, provided you observe all our liberties and laws; but if not, not.' The painting shows a scene of some desolation, the aftermath possibly of an explosion, with several two-dimensional, expressionless figures – dead, wounded or shocked – scattered in a ring round the foreground and into the middle-distance, against a lurid orange mountain and a riotously coloured sky of green, orange and purple. What was Kitaj's intention? To illustrate his text with a contrast between Goya's *Disasters of War* and a tropical paradise by Gauguin? If so, he has done it with a curious absence of feeling, as though, the subject once having been chosen, the rest of his task were merely to make it as decorative as possible.

But if not, what? The problem seems inherent in his faces. In the portraits, such as the large double painting of James Joll and John Golding, the likeness of the sitters' features, supported by a characteristic stance and various items of domestic use – cooking-utensils and books with their titles prominently displayed – is enough to tell the story and justify the decor. But in the subject-paintings it is precisely in the depiction of faces that Kitaj's nerve, or his imagination, deserts him and he resorts to shorthand. He is up to every trick – idiosyncratic haircuts, hearing aids, hats, spectacles, blurrings and shadowings – to pass them off as human, but they only look the more like advertisers' dummies. So the meaning of *If Not, Not* comes down to an image of damaged dummies in *Paradise Lost*, which seems an oversimplified response to the coronation oath of Aragon, let alone to Goya or Gauguin. It remains, however, a seductive painting, so that one wonders if Kitaj isn't after all a double agent, secretly leading the devotees of the figurative towards the unholy delights of abstraction.

Edward Burra once told Sir John Rothenstein what it felt like to be in Madrid near the start of the Spanish Civil War.

One day when I was lunching with some Spanish friends, smoke kept blowing by the restaurant window. I asked where it came from. 'Oh, it's nothing,' someone

answered . . . 'It's only a church being burnt.' That made me feel sick. It was terrifying: constant strikes, churches on fire, and pent-up hatred everywhere. Everybody knew that something appalling was about to happen.

The Civil War gave a decisive twist to an imagination already fed on Jacobean tragedy, Gothic fantasy and the Spanish painters of the grotesque, including Goya. One can see what the change amounted to in two of the powerful paintings in the Lefevre Gallery's memorial exhibition for Burra, who died at the end of last year. *John Deth*, painted in 1932, seems to be an illustration for Poe's story *The Masque of the Red Death*, a gothic orgy of writhing, mostly blue-clothed figures in a red-draped room, dominated in the right foreground by the figure of Death embracing a bedizened woman with a white face and huge staring eyes. *Death and the Soldiers*, painted in 1940, shows Death alone in the centre of the foreground, no longer a skeleton but a reddish-brown giant whose leering face is just visible behind his cowl and whose heavy arms call in the spectator. Beyond him is part of a calm and orderly camp in the desert, an unattended anti-tank gun, lumpy soldiers conversing at the door of a hut or attending to their equipment. The colours – watercolour, like nearly all Burra's paintings – are pale brown, green and grey. The difference is between a personal fascination for the macabre and a knowledge that life itself makes the private nightmare manifest.

Burra did not so much learn from life as learn to trust his own intense imagination. Hence the solidity and authority of these images, hence their consistency, for whether the figures are ladies at a café table, negroes at a loose end in Harlem, black-jowled patrons of a sleazy nightclub or actual executioners, bulbously muscled, naked and masked in a medieval torture-chamber, they suggest the same readiness for atrocity. Even the members of the Cuban band, stiff and slick in their glossy short black hair and tight white trousers, are at least as redolent of the political history of Latin America as of its musical rhythms. The sense of evil, noted by Rothenstein in his catalogue for Burra's 1973 Tate retrospective emanates less from the figures themselves than from their expectancy of the 'something appalling . . . about to happen' and their unquestion-

Michael Longley

Obsequies

They are proof-reading my obituary now
As I fall asleep in formalin and float
Just below the surface of death, mute
At the centre of my long obsequies.

Were they to queue up to hear me breathing
The chemicals, then head over heels
All my lovers would fall in love again,
For I am a big fish in the aquarium,

A saint whose bits and pieces separate
Into a dozen ceremonies, pyres

For hands that bedded down like Gandhi
With the untouchables, funerals for feet.

They have set my eyes like two diamonds
In the black velvet of another's head,
Bartered silver, gold from knuckle and tooth
To purchase some sustenance for the needy.

Meanwhile, back at the dissecting theatre,
Part of me waits to find in sinks and basins
A final ocean, tears, water from the tap,
Superstitious rivers to take me there.

ing alliance with it, symbolised perhaps most memorably in the painting from the late Forties called *Procession*, a Chirico-like street down which two lines of half-naked, bald galley-slaves tote an enormous black kettle with a pair of monstrous eyes peering out from under the lid.

Burra, who stood well aside from all groups and movements and who lived, somewhat reclusively, most of his life at Rye, can now be recognised as a painter as essential to the understanding of the last half-century as Goya was to the evil times he lived in.

Design

Drusilla Beyfus

Two Into One

Independent galleries offering the best in British crafts are almost unknown outside the big cities, but this week sees the launch of a new venture, opened by the Minister for the Arts, Lord Donaldson. Prescote Gallery, Prescote, Cropredy, Oxfordshire, will put to the test some interesting theories. Is there a discriminating buying public prepared to travel to see exceptionally good work? Will leading craftsmen who have a ready market at home and abroad continue to support the venture? Can the claim to represent local rural crafts remain compatible with a stated quest for high quality?

The gallery director, Ann Hartree, is pinning her hopes on a highly personal selection of design for exhibition and sale, on competitive prices, and a firm decision not to go for all tastes. She aims to appeal to the interested, to collectors, to patrons in search of a piece to commission, and to those members of the general public with their eye in who are prepared to buy work by little-known names at low prices.

Three different levels of work are assembled in the large, white galleries converted from disused farm buildings and all within mooring distance of the cows. There are top-drawer contributions by the well-known names – pots by Elizabeth Fritsch, furniture by John Makepeace and Richard le Trobe Bateman, toys by Sam Smith, silver by Celia Over. Much of this work is the kind for which Britain is justly famous – designs, sculptures, hangings, coverings and constructs which aim to dispel the differences between the crafts and fine arts. The method of making may be rooted in the disciplines of traditional craftsmanship but the end-product is much more than that. Unlike some commercial craft shops, which tend on account of cramped accommodation to be gloomy and inhospitable, Prescote has capitalised on its inheritance of space and light. The fittings, furnishings and graphics have been included in the emphasis on lively design.

The launch of the gallery has been achieved through a very British cross-fertilisation between private enterprise –

putting up the cash and the drive – and the public sector, providing expertise, encouragement but no money. Prescote was the home of the late Richard Crossman, MP and former NS editor, and the conversion of the galleries has been funded by Anne Crossman from the proceeds of her husband's *Diaries*. The Craft Advisory Committee gave advice, and, the Crossman connection being what it is, the Sunday preview was attended by Sir Paul Reilly, Director of the Council of Industrial Design, and Lady Birk of the Department of the Environment.

Curiously enough, that Prescote should give its name to a craft gallery can be said to fit with Dick Crossman's philosophy. In a little-known entry in his 1967 diary he prophetically concluded that good things make a sounder personal investment than highly-taxed gilt-edged securities. Of his walnut and Welsh slate coffee table commissioned from John Makepeace he wrote:

The sides look solid enough until you touch them whereat four beautiful square boxes slide out on silent castors . . . the only way I can save is to enjoy myself by giving her [Anne] expensive things for the house.

It is not merely the investment aspect which makes the ownership of the one-off, the hand-made and the lasting so pleasurable in an age of mass-production, standardisation and obsolescence. At home, for example, lack of space, time, money and energy puts a premium on artefacts and articles which combine the bread-and-butter of usefulness with the indulgence of decoration. Potters, for instance, have ways of simplifying domesticity. The necessity of owning one ornamental platter to dust and another for the cheese simply disappears when two into one will go.

The message may largely be lost on the many industrialists and businessmen who prefer antique for the boardroom and sport for public sponsorship. But it is cheering to hear that those who do take the plunge and commission original work sometimes find surprising rewards. For example, one leading firm of chartered accountants and management consultants, Arthur Andersen, commissioned a major tapestry by Archie Brennen. This now jollies up the office reception hall, and, on a practical level, the hanging has improved the acoustics which no doubt helps clients to hear themselves think about their base profit line. Also, 'it is the subject of considerable admiration,' said a firm's spokesman modestly, which should be read as a polite rebuttal of the deeply-held British prejudice that art does not earn its keep.

Fragments of good news in the foreground of events must not be allowed to obscure the backdrop of indifference and missed opportunity. Mentmore is only a memory. Jubilee year has launched a load of red, white and blue British tat in the name of craftsmanship. The showpiece Royal Train chuffs on with its newly decorated carriages looking much like a student's bed-sitter. The National Theatre is still without its rightful heritage of decorative arts and crafts. Prescote gallery is open between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., Wednesday to Sunday, Easter to Christmas. Light lunches and teas are served in the licensed buttery.

Music

Andrew Clements

Good Ear

English Chamber Orchestra South Bank/
Radio 3

Complete sets, whether in the concert hall or on record, are in vogue at the moment. At least integral recordings have a documentary value, but what is it that appeals to audiences in the prospect of hearing all the Beethoven quartets or the Mozart violin sonatas played by the same artists in a series of concerts which happily absorbs the juvenilia along with the masterpieces? Beethoven is the favoured candidate this season, and certainly, running through the quartet or piano-sonata canon reveals very neatly the progress of his artistic and spiritual souls. Mozart's development was much less straightforward, much more compressed; he wrote very strictly to the demands of commission or utility – a set of quartets for an aristocratic patron, concertos for a visiting soloist – so that each genre progressed in fits and starts. No Mozart cycle (unless it be the operas) would give a rounded picture, the violin concertos perhaps least of all. All five were written in the space of nine months in 1775 for Mozart to play in Salzburg; and although the gap between the imitative structures of the First and the highly personalised statement of the Fifth is a measure of the adaptability of his genius, there is no doubt that all date from the same period in his development.

Pinchas Zukerman's series of concerts with the English Chamber Orchestra intelligently presented the five concertos in a varied context stretched over four evenings, adding the isolated concerto movements and the orchestral works for two violins and for violin and viola, as well as two symphonies and some concert arias. It made quite a substantial Mozart festival, a counterpart to the mammoth series of piano concertos which Barenboim gave with the ECO two seasons ago. Like Barenboim, Zukerman has taken to conducting his own concertos, his technique as yet unrefined and its results sometimes rather approximate.

But as a violinist, there are few artists alive who can burnish a phrase as warmly as he, or sustain a golden tone more consistently. The beauty of some of his playing of slow movements was the outstanding memory of the series, most notably in the Third (in G major) and Fifth (A major) Concertos. In the faster movements he sometimes let his enthusiasm run away with him, scrambling semiquaver passages with the orchestra valiantly following in his wake, and it was this lack of direction that marred some of the performances. Physically, conducting a performance from the fiddle is much more difficult than from the keyboard when, even if both hands are occupied, the head and eyes can give vital indications; Zukerman

tried to overcome this handicap with general body-shaking motions of enthusiasm. The gain in refinement of introducing a conductor would have been immense.

For the double concertos, he was joined by Jaime Laredo, a neat, limpid violinist who also took the solo part while Zukerman took up the viola in the Sinfonia Concertante in E flat which ended the series, dwarfing everything that came before it. Viola virtuosos are so thin on the ground that it's a pity that Zukerman does not play it more frequently, for he plays the instrument more beautifully than anyone else I've heard. He and Laredo refused to dwell on any of the work's poignant beauties, producing a lively performance that did not plumb the depths of emotion. The ECO responded with excellent ensemble; all round it was a series to delight the ear rather than engage the intellect.

Weekend Competition

No 2465 Set by T. A. Dyer

Robert Graves's poem 'The Persian Version' describes the great Persian success at Marathon. Could we have celebrations of Amin's victory at Entebbe, the canny Italian tactical withdrawal in North Africa, Britain's defeat of inflation, and similar misunderstood 'reverses'. 150 words maximum, prose or verse; by 10 June.

Result of No 2462 Set by Noah

Competitors were asked for examples of the copywriting talents of famous authors.

Report By Fat Jeff

Now the back half of the NS is under new management, we've had a number of snide and hopeful inquiries about the future of the comp. Will Little Keith be out on his tiny ear? Can Parrott be allowed to go on winning one week and setting the next? Should the Lemon Kid be dunked in a bath of his own acid? Rest assured: the literary department here is an offshoot of the comp complex, and not, as is sometimes assumed, *vice versa*. So the long-established principles of whim and venality will continue to govern the judging. As proof of which, we give you again both Fagg and Parrott. Not a bad week at all. McGowan (Lowry) and Vita-Finzi (Macaulay) benefited by spurning the obvious. £6 each.

Smirnoff was known as Smirrm's Knoff to the Red Dwarves of Voll-Gah, which lies far to the east of Eridor, where Smirrm, a fiery dragon over two miles long, dwelt beside Allkoholl, the Liquid Mountain. It is said that the dragon made this delicious-tasting spirit from herbs gathered by the Elven folk in Elrond on the night of the first full moon after Mirkwyre Day. The Hobbits tell how the Goblins lusted after the recipe of the Knoff, and many times tried in vain to steal it, but it was lost after Smirrm was slain by Starlyn, a wandering Orc. After many moons the precious parchment came, no one knows how, into the hands of Andsorr the Bibulous, who gave it to Gandalf. Gandalf managed to decipher Smirrm's runes, and made the wonderful drink himself, and guarded its secret with more care than he gave to the Great Ring itself. But because he

is wise, Gandalf has now made it available to the Men of the West. As Gandalf said: 'I could not tell an Orc from old Andsorr until I rediscovered Smirrm's Knoff.'

Smirnoff - the very spirit of Middle Earth.

E. O. PARROTT

Could 'doble vista' explain the *two* vultures in the washbasin, Geoffrey wondered?

'I have no bee shames for you . . . ' Dr Vigil hesitated, ' . . . indigestion.'

'Must have something.' They turned into the Pulqueria Mordida (Geoffrey was still unsure; did it mean dog-bite or policeman?). Inside, his mind blank, he gestured wildly, 'Tengo . . . dolor del estomago . . . '

The barman frowned. 'Turista?'

'Dammit, I've drunk away my life here!'

'It means diarrhoea, also,' Vigil whispered.

'Ah!' Geoffrey nodded at the now scowling barman. 'Revancha del Montezuma? Haha!'

The scowl deepened.

'What's that medicine, Vigil? Bar chains?'

'Bee shame; it's English.'

'Never heard.' Geoffrey asked the barman, 'Bee shames por explosion del estomago?'

The barman, uncomprehending, proffered tamales, lime slices, even mucous pulque in a bucket, then, shrugging, began shooining a turkey off the enchilladas.

Feeling ghastly, Geoffrey rushed blindly out the back of the pulqueria past an astonished mordida (so it *did* mean policeman), and stumbled into the ravine, to lie amongst the street rubbish, the dead burros and the squabbling vultures.

Don't let a silly misunderstanding spoil your trip! Always carry Beecham's powders!

MORAY MCGOWAN

It is a wise woman who, wishing to modify her husband's habits, realises that any such alteration must appear to stem from *his* will rather than hers. Now Lady Glencora was, in many of her actions, foolish, headstrong and ill-advised, but even she had intuited this simple truth. So, when worried by Planty's enhanced *High Tar* intake as the strains of the Session multiplied, she resorted deftly to the strategy of the indirect approach. 'So amusing at Madame Max's last night,' she recollected at the breakfast table. 'Mr Daubeny was observing that the new entry to the House were such weak-nerved young men that they could smoke only these mild *Menthol* cigarettes.' Now Planty Pall was not a man given to entrenched dislikes; but if there was one man his cool heart had the energy to detest, it was Mr Daubeny . . . So that, trespassing into Planty's smoking-room two evenings later, Lady Glencora was not surprised to find it suffused with the soft, delectable fragrance of *Menthol* . . . She made no remark, but glowing with that feminine instinct that strikes so much deeper than the most profound male intellect, smiled gently to herself as she stole from the room.

MARTIN FAGG

As every schoolboy knows, the Greek theatre at Odorona was renowned in the ancient world, not for the magnificence of its setting, for all Greek theatres were so appointed, nor for the excellence of its construction, for no improvement had been introduced in this quarter for some five centuries, nor for the hardness of its seats, for marble remains marble wheresoever it may lie, but for the felicitous conjunction of aerial currents and architectonic geometry whereby smells as well as gestures and speeches were conveyed from the actors to each and every spectator. Performances were accordingly heightened with perfumed blossoms, rancid wine, decaying flesh and whatever the action required. But, if odours could be proffered, they could not be abolished at will. A perspiring Achilles, an errant goat, might undo

the labour of a hundred garlanded maidens. Today, no such sword hangs over Odorona. A swift application of Mum . . .

C. VITA-FINZI



Tony Miles

Chess

No 35

Las Palmas

The annual Las Palmas grandmaster tournament seems to be developing into yet another exhibition of Karpov's current domination of world chess. He has won his first six games thus extending his run of consecutive victories to 13 (the others being the last two rounds at Bad Lauterberg and five games on board one at the European team championship) and opening up a lead of 1½ points over the field. He is playing remarkably quickly, and, with the exception of his game against Browne (published last week) crushing the opposition with consummate ease. Indeed the world champion's results over the last few months are rivalling even Fischer at his best.

Another feature of the tournament has been the form of ex-world champion Tal. After drawing his first three games he came to life in convincing fashion (see this week's game) and moved up to share second place with 4½/6.

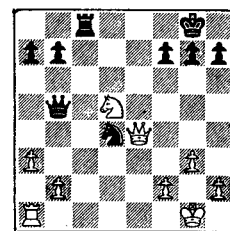
White: M. Tal

Black: B. Larsen

1. P-K4, P-QB3 (Caro-Kann); 2. P-Q4; P-Q4; 3. N-Q2, P x P; 4. N x P, N-B3; 5. N x Nch, NP x N. A double-edged line. Black weakens his pawn structure hoping to gain counterplay down the KN file - possibly a dangerous choice against Tal. 6. B-QB4, B-B4; 7. B-B4, Q-N3; 8. B-QN3, P-QR4. I think that black should try to castle Q side in which case this advance seems out of place. 9. P-QR4, N-Q2; 10. N-B3, Q-R3. Preventing O-O, which also seems strange. I must confess that I don't really understand what black is trying to do. 11. N-R4, B-N3; 12. Q-N4. Threatening 13. N x B, RP x N; 14. B x Pch. 12. . . . P-K3; 13. B-B7! A fine move, preventing the BK escaping to the Q side and threatening such things as 14. B x KP. 13. . . . P-KB4. A serious concession. The QB is now restricted and white can break open the K side more easily. 14. Q-B4, B-N2; 15. P-R3! O-O; 16. O-O, QR-B1; 17. P-N4. Forcing open the KN file. If now 17. . . . P x P; 18. P x P followed by Q-R2 is decisive. 17. . . . P-B4; 18. NP x P, P-B5; 19. B-R2, P x P; 20. P-QB3. Preparing to pick up the KBP by B-N1. 20. . . . KR-K1; 21. KR-K1, Q-QB3. Possibly an oversight but it is difficult to suggest an alternative. 22. P-Q5! Q x RP. If 22. . . . Q x B; 23. R x Rch. 23. Q x QBP, Q x Q; 24. R x Rch, R x R; 25. B x Q. White's initiative has been transformed into a vastly superior endgame. His active pieces, combined with the passed QP are decisive. 25. . . . R-K5; 26. N x B, R x B; 27. N-K7ch, K-R1; 28. B x P, B-R3ch; 29. K-N1, R-B5; 30. N-B8, R x P; 31. N-N6, N-K4; 32. P-B4, B-K6; 33. P-Q6, N-B3; 34. P-Q7, B-N4; 35. B-B3ch, K-N1; 36. R-N1. Black resigned.

Problem 35

Black to play. He is threatened with 2. Q x N and 2. N-K7ch. Should he play (a) . . . Q x P, (b) . . . N-B3, (c) . . . R-Q1, (d) . . . Q-B5, (e) . . . R-B5, (f) . . . N-K7ch; 2. K-N2, R-K1 or (g) anything else? Assess



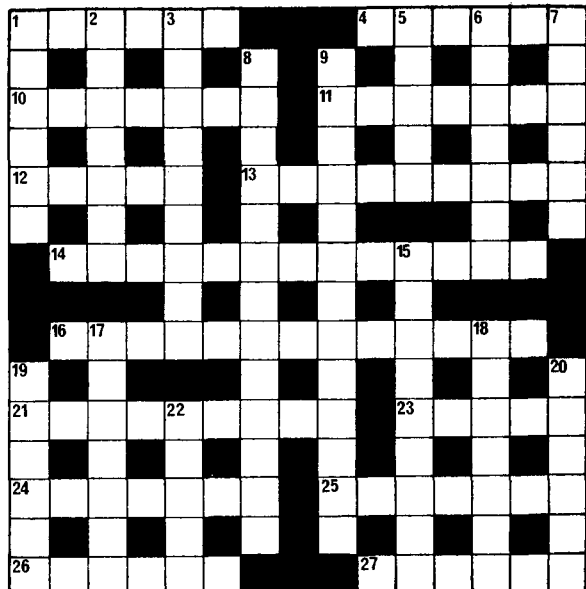
the position and comment briefly on the other suggestions. Entries to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than Wednesday 8 June.

Solution to Problem 33

1. . . . P-B3! 2. P x P (otherwise 2. . . . P x P), R-Q2 regaining the pawn with a virtually winning position. If 3. N-N4, N x N; 4. R x N, B-R4! wins. Or 3. P-B4, B x P! The game continued, 3. R-B1, B x P; 4. R x R, Q x R; 5. Q-B3, Q x Q; 6. B x Q, N-N3; 7. P-K5 and black won.

Weekend Crossword 1217

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1217, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 7 June.



ACROSS

1. Pieces of good fortune do not seem to come singly (6).
4. The place for a proverb about fighting (6).
10. The problem of a novel with the cover on back to front (7).
11. Hunter goes round at a speech (7).
12. Short or curly (5).
13. Provide weapons before there is trouble about sick animal (9).
14. It found Carter transformed into an influential ally (6, 2, 5).
16. Politician who keeps me hidden in an ancient setting (4, 9).
21. Translated proses for teacher (9).
23. Precious things appealing to friends? (5).
24. A mixture of love and hunger brutalise (7).
25. Suppose one is included in the Enigma Variations (7).
26. Infer there is a tailless bird in a river (6).

27. 'His cushions on his —' (K. Henry IV, pt 1) (6).

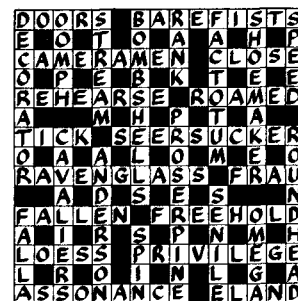
DOWN

1. Drug taker in mad dictator's grasp (6).
2. One who fights and perishes under the sun? (7).
3. Watch for a back issue with an article on it (9).
5. Little bit of publicity about fighting for a prize (5).
6. The rest are disturbed about the sick being quieter (7).
7. What the fan does at present after victory (6).
8. It is put on food, the wrong signal about where to send it (5, 8).
9. Means of getting out of London as a change to cure Tom and Martin (8, 5).
15. Healer makes solemn expression about rising literary men (9).
17. Pompous in speech, a poet loses his head and includes rubbish (7).
18. A university town is just the place for study (7).

19. Afforded sunburnt colour at holiday resort (6).
20. As escorts we are put above a certain woman's (6).
22. Code of conduct observed in the thickest jungle (5).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1215



Prizewinners to No 1215

Anne and Per Tueite Colombo
Mrs C. D. Wood (Babbacombe)
J. E. Mercer (Crail, Fife)

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The Community provides a term-time home for 100 children between the ages of 4 and 18 of average and above average intelligence from unsettled home backgrounds, and offers scope for a wide range of activities.

Accommodation is provided for married or single staff. State school holidays plus a day and a half per week during term time.

For further details and application form apply to The Directors, Caldecott Community, Mersham le Hatch, Ashford, Kent. Completed applications to be returned by 10 June 1977. Thereafter informal interviews and visits can be arranged.

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Wuscraft Secretary

with some marketing ability to organise our sales of craft goods from the Third World Co-operatives and to undertake secretarial work for the Field Unit.

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General Secretary, W.U.S.,
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Telephone 01-808 5341

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The salary is on a scale ranging from £4,900 p.a. to £7,550 p.a. Starting salary will be according to experience.

Further details of the post can be obtained from:

The General Secretary, Engineers and Managers' Association, Station House, Fox Lane North, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 9HW.

Closing date: 20 June 1977.

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LECTURESHIP IN PAINTING: Applicants should be practising, exhibiting artists qualified by training and experience.

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LECTURESHIP IN SCULPTURE: Applicants should be practising, exhibiting artists qualified by training and experience. They should possess a thorough knowledge of both traditional and current media.

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requires

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Continued from p. 728

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Theatres

ALDWYCH THEATRE (Royal Shakespeare Company). 836 5404. Recorded booking info: 836 5332. 'Destiny and King Lear' in repertoire. See daily press for dates and times. RSC also at Piccadilly Theatre in 'Wild Oats'.

CHICHESTER. 0243 86333. Tonight, 28 & 30 May, 1 & 2 June at 7: 'In Order of Appearance'. 28 May at 2, 31 May at 7, 'Waters of the Moon'.

NATIONAL THEATRE. 928 2252. 'Blithe Spirit', 'Tales from the Vienna Woods', 'Volpone', 'Julius Caesar', 'State of Revolution', 'Bedroom Farce', 'Four to One', 'To Those Born Later' & 'Strawberry Fields'. See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 928 2256.

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ROYAL COURT. 730 1745. Last perfs to-night 8, Sat. 5 & 8.30. Annette Crosbie & Dudley Sutton in 'Curse of the Starving Class'. 'The play is outstanding... brilliant'. Time Out.

THEATRE ROYAL, WINDSOR. 95 61107. 31 May-9 July 'The Norman Conquests' by Alan Ayckbourn; 31 May-11 June 'Table Manners'.

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 Daily 10-12.30 & 2-4.30.
 Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1.

Further details from
 PROP, The National Prisoner's Movement, 32a Park Road, Colliers Wood, SW19. 01-542 3744.

SEMINAR on Political Censorship; an international perspective. The Defence, Literature and the Arts Society, invite you to join Keith Kyle, Eric Abraham, Jan Kavan and Carlos Fortin at the ICA, Thur 26 May. 7 p.m.

'FILMS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH' 'Freedom Railway' - a story of the Tan-Zam Railway, built and financed by the Chinese, and 'Maragoli' - an insight into a Kenyan village, experiencing one of the world's fastest growth rates of population. Admission: Members 50p, Non-Members 75p. 6.30 p.m. Wed. 1 June. Focus Group, Royal Commonwealth Society, 18 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2. 930 6733.

EAST LONDON HISTORY WORKSHOP 2, Hoxton Hall, Hoxton Street, N1. 2-3 July 'East London Between the Wars'. Speakers include Stan Newens, MP, 'East London Working Class'; Bill Jones 'Dalston Busmen'; Mick Mindel 'Tailoring Trade'; Jim Wolveridge 'Growing Up in Stepney'; Bill Fishman 'Hackney Labour League of Youth'; Raphael Samuel 'Workers Theatre Movement'; Phil Piratin 'Fighting Fascism'. Tickets £2 (East Londoners £1, OAPs 25p) from Jerry White, 59 Casimir Rd, ES.

GERDA BOYSEN lectures on 'Biodynamic Psychology' every Wednesday, 7.30 p.m. Adm. £1. Acacia House, Centre Avenue, The Vale, Acton Park, London W3. 743 2437.

BUDDHIST SOCIETY, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1. Sat. 28 May 3 p.m. 'Open Day'. Tues. 31 May 6.30 p.m. 'Introducing Buddhism'. Wed. 1 June 6.30 p.m. 'Tibetan & Theravada Buddhism' - two separate Study Classes. All welc. Snd s.a.e. for full prog.

THEOSOPHY. Informal Forum on Basic Theosophy. Sun. 29 May 8 p.m. S.a.e. for free pamphlet, book list, programme of talks. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2.

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